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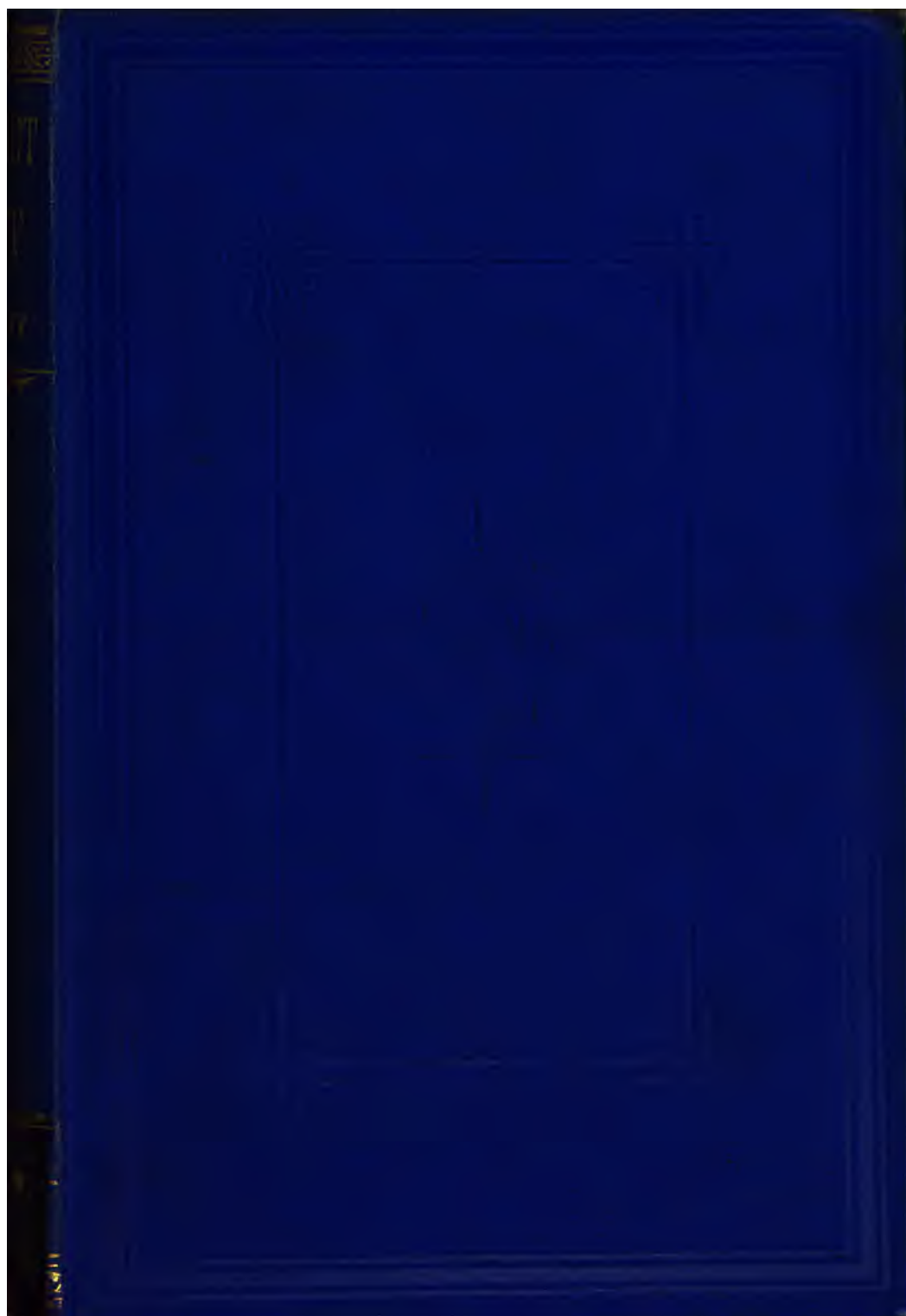
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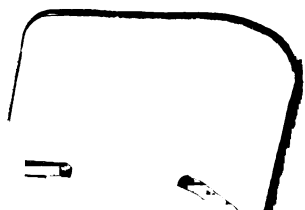
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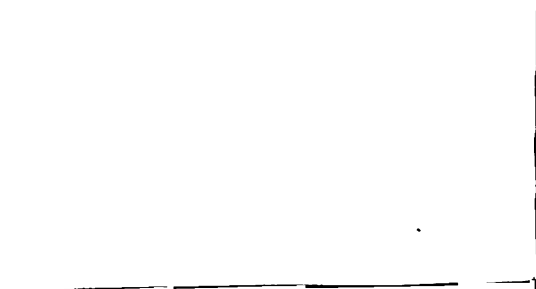
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ALL BUT LOST.



ALL BUT LOST.

A Novel.

BY

G. A. HENTY,

AUTHOR OF "THE MARCH TO MAGDALA," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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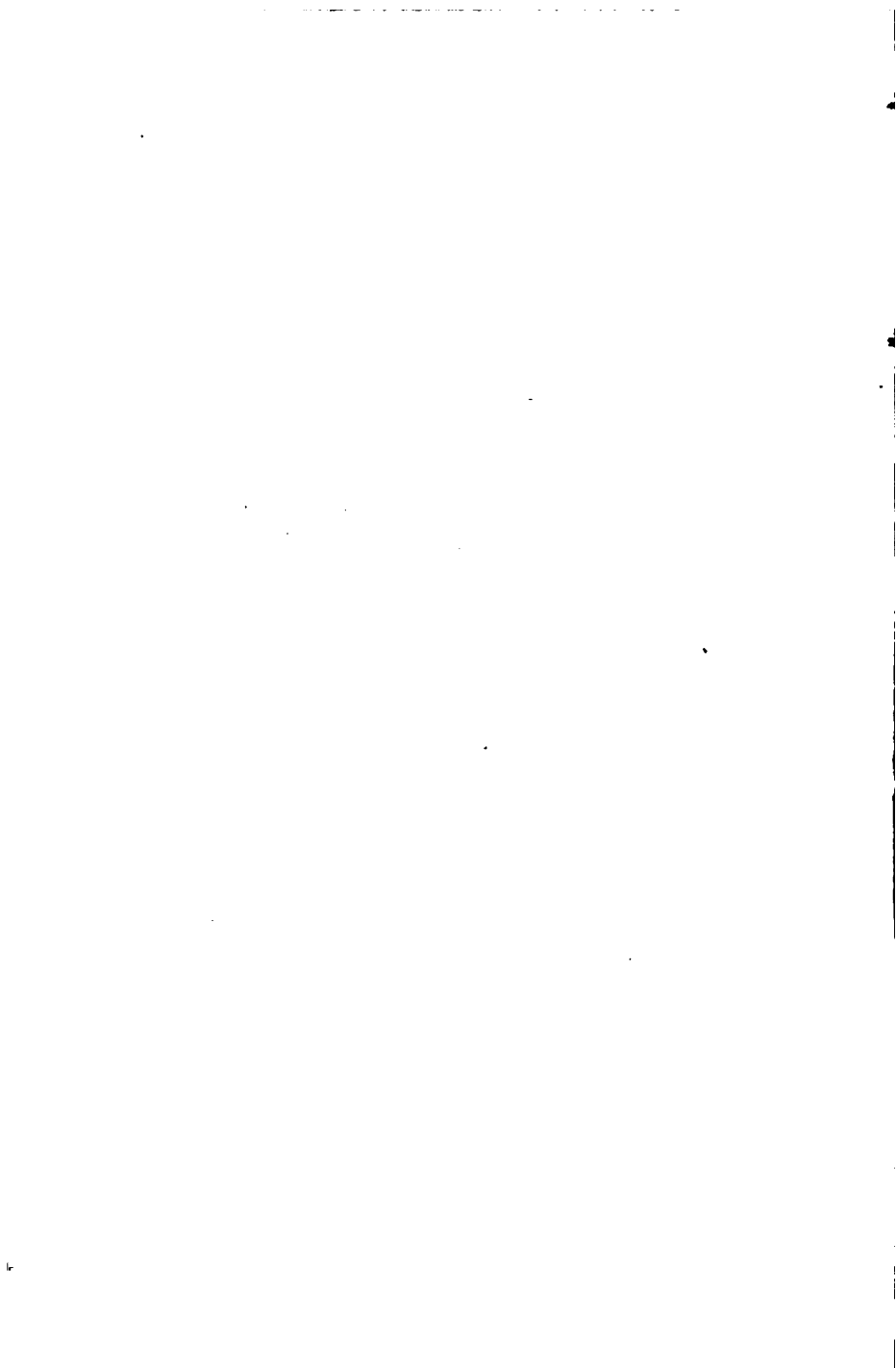
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ALL BUT LOST.

CHAPTER I.

ARCADES AMBO.

FRED BINGHAM was now rather an important person in his way. He had a large number of works in hand ; he was contractor for miles of sewers in and around London. He was building a nobleman's mansion in Sussex, and a large church in Birmingham. He had a pier in hand down in Cornwall, and a railway in Durham. Altogether he appeared to be a flourishing man. People who met him casually, spoke of him as an extremely pushing, sharp young fellow, with a pleasant manner ; men who met him in business said he was a cute fellow, but hard, sir, hard as nails. Any one who had seen him at home, as

his wife and his servants saw him, knew him for a morose and irritable tyrant. Not that he had not his pleasant moments, when he would jest with his wife, and speak jokingly to the servants, and be for a short time pleasant and apparently light-hearted, but the slightest thing would bring the cloud over his face, and his sharp voice would say the most bitter things to every one around him, regardless of who heard him. His wife was greatly changed since he married her; never actually pretty, there had yet been a trusting kindness in her face, and under happier auspices the poor little heiress might have blossomed out into a very bright little flower. But now the bud had closed up on itself, as if stricken with the touch of a bitter March wind, and she was a silent, timid woman. She loved her husband still, but she feared him even more than she loved him. She was always nervously trying to please him, and was ever ready to laugh if he was in a humour to joke. She bore his bitterest taunts without an answer, although a flush of pain, as if she had been struck, came up sometimes over her face when he spoke so to her before the servants. In money matters her husband was liberal. He

had always been openhanded as a boy, and now he never grudged his wife any thing that she fancied. She had her carriage, and her maid, and when she was in the country he seldom came back from his visit to London without a rich dress, or a pretty bonnet, or some present which he thought she would like. To his servants too he was a liberal, and in some respects a kind master. He liked the pleasure of giving, and if presents could have bought love, he would have been adored by those around him. But his irritable temper and his bitter tongue would constantly inflict wounds which no presents could salve, no mere burst of good humour heal. One reason of his irritability was unquestionably the state of his business. Large as it apparently was, his position was precarious. The whole of his wife's capital was sunk in it, but that was as nothing in comparison to the requirements of such extensive works as he was now carrying on. He had, therefore, been obliged to borrow large sums of money, and to discount his payments for work done. He was staying alone now in his house in Harley Street, his wife being down at a place he had taken to be near his work at

Durham ; and as usual, during these London visits, was in an exceedingly irritable state of temper, when among his letters he received one signed Robert Barton. Its contents were brief.

“ PRIVATE ENQUIRY OFFICE.

“ SIR,—I am in possession of information of the last importance to yourself, and which I wish an early opportunity of discussing with you. I shall be at this office from eleven until one every day, or will call upon you at any time for which you may choose to make an appointment.”

Fred Bingham's pale face became even whiter than usual. “What the devil does this fellow want to see me about? Business of the last importance;” and his thoughts at once flew to the matter of his cousin Frank. “Pshaw!” he exclaimed, “that is out of the question. It must be that he has heard that some one is not solvent, or that some of my bills perhaps have got into bad hands. At any rate, I must go and see the fellow.” Then he put Mr. Barton's letter aside, opened several of the others, some of which he read through carefully, others threw aside at a glance. The last he opened was from his wife.

"Bah!" he said, impatiently, "what quantities of twaddle women write, as if any one was going to read them through," and he tore the letter up and threw the fragments into a waste-paper basket. He drew his desk to him and wrote several letters; then he looked at his watch. "Eleven o'clock. I will go up to the City at once, and see this Barton. I shall only worry about it until I know what it is. Mary," he said sharply, as the servant entered, "fetch a hansom, and look sharp about it."

Mr. Barton was alone in his den when the clerk brought in Mr. Bingham's card. "Show him in," and as the clerk left the room, Mr. Barton rose, took a small bundle of papers from an iron safe, and placed them in a drawer by his side. Fred Bingham entered. "Take a seat, Mr. Bingham."

"I have received a note from you this morning," Fred said shortly, "and thought it as well to call at once."

"Quite as well," Mr. Barton said slowly, rubbing his chin and examining his visitor's face, as if to read his character; "quite as well," he repeated rather more rapidly, as if his survey had been a satisfactory one. "Yes. There is nothing

like attending to business at once. That has always been my rule."

Fred Bingham made a gesture of impatience.

"If you will tell me what you want," he said, "I shall be glad. I have business of importance to attend to."

"No doubt, no doubt, Mr. Bingham, but hardly I imagine of such importance as the present, as you will I am sure allow when you have heard me. Now, Mr. Bingham," he went on sharply and decisively, as if he had now quite made up his mind as to his visitor's character, and the conclusion he had arrived at were satisfactory, "we will proceed to business. We are both of us men of the world."

Fred Bingham did not like the opening. His own experience had been universal that when two men agreed that they were men of the world, they were about to propose or to carry out some doubtful business which would not bear a rigid investigation. He only nodded, however, and the detective went on—

"The business relates to family matters." Again the old fear came into Fred Bingham's thoughts, and the man who was watching him

saw instantly that there was some sore point or other in his family affairs. "You are, I believe, sir, the next of kin and recognised heir of Captain Bradshaw, of Lowndes Square and of Wyvern Park, in the county of Leicester. You may readily imagine that a man of my profession does not ask such a question from mere impertinent curiosity."

"I presume not," Fred Bingham said coldly. "You are mistaken. My cousin, Mr. Maynard, is an equally near relative with myself,—indeed, as son of the elder sister, he is Captain Bradshaw's nearest heir."

"Quite so," Mr. Barton said; "so I understood. But I am also aware—for in these matters one, of course, makes oneself acquainted with all particulars—that a quarrel has arisen between Captain Bradshaw and Mr. Maynard, and that you may now not unreasonably be regarded as his sole heir."

"I am not aware of Captain Bradshaw's intention with regard to the disposal of his property," Fred Bingham said stiffly.

"No!" Mr. Barton said as if surprised. "I imagined that you were, at least it is whispered—

these things get whispered, you know—that you applied to a party in the city, who shall be nameless, and obtained a heavyish loan on the strength of your expectation in that quarter.”

Fred Bingham coloured scarlet, and was about to speak, when Mr. Barton stopped him.

“Pooh, pooh, my dear sir, don’t be angry. As men of the world we understand these matters, and the little affair in question is not known beyond a very small circle of safe men. If men did not mention the matter to their particular friends, you know, accidents might happen; a gentleman might borrow twice, for instance, from different parties upon the strength of his expectations.”

Fred Bingham bit his lip, for he had only the night before been meditating on the possibility of some such step as that suggested. He did not speak, and Mr. Barton went on—

“I think, then, that it will assist us to a better understanding of the position, if we assume—just assume, you know—that you are the probable heir to Captain Bradshaw’s very large property, now that Captain Bradshaw has had this unfortunate
-rel with your cousin.”

Mr. Barton laid a meaning stress upon the word unfortunate, and Fred Bingham said hastily—

“I had nothing to do with the quarrel.”

“Of course not, of course not,” Mr. Barton said, having not the least doubt but that he had, a doubt of which he made a mental note for future use. Fred Bingham felt that thus far he had had much the worst of the struggle, and he said,—

“I really do not see, Mr. Barton, where the conversation about family matters is leading us to.”

“Patience, my dear sir,” Mr. Barton said, composedly, “I am coming to the point. Now you being, as we have assumed for the sake of argument, the probable heir to the very large property of Captain Bradshaw, it would be a new and somewhat unpleasant circumstance if another person should appear being a nearer relation than yourself, and having consequently stronger claims upon his affections. In fact, let us suppose a grandson.”

Fred Bingham was relieved of the fear which had hitherto oppressed him, and he said, angrily,—

"Really, Mr. Barton, I cannot enter upon any such impossible conjecture."

"But suppose I tell you, Mr. Bingham, that it is not a conjecture at all, but a fact, and that such a grandson is really in existence?"

Fred Bingham for a moment sat speechless, and then exclaimed, fiercely,—

"I should say it was a lie."

"No doubt you would; no doubt you would," Mr. Barton said, very composedly; "and very natural too. But for all that it is true. Your cousin, Captain Bradshaw's daughter, ran away from home, married and died, leaving a child behind her. That child is alive!"

Fred Bingham sat in complete stupefaction. He had heard, it is true, years ago of a daughter of Captain Bradshaw, but the possibility of her child being in existence to step in between him and the fortune had never entered his mind. He did not doubt the fact, for Barton's manner was too earnest to be doubted. He sat astounded and crushed under the unexpected disaster.

"Here," Mr. Barton went on, quietly taking the papers from the drawer, "here is a copy of the register of her marriage, here is a copy of the

baptism of the infant, and I could procure—were it to the point, which it is not—a copy of the register of her burial.”

Fred Bingham sat for some time in silence, but after the first burst of surprise and despair, his busy brain began to work again. Why did this man come to him instead of going either to Captain Bradshaw himself, or to the heir? Why did he come to him? Naturally because he saw an advantage in so doing; because, in fact, he would get more out of him. At least there was hope then. When he spoke, his words expressed these thoughts.

“You have not finished, Mr. Barton. Of course you come to me with an object; of course that object is money. Now why do you come to me before you go to them? Why do you suppose I would pay you more?”

“Very good, indeed, sir. I like doing business in a practical way, and that’s what I call practical talk. I can only give you the answer in the words of your own question. I came to you simply because I do believe you would give me more than either Captain Bradshaw or his grandson; and also, and mainly, because when you and

I have agreed upon the matter, there is no fear of its going any further—it would not suit either of us for it to get abroad. Now, on the other hand, Captain Bradshaw or his grandson might refuse to pay. The relationship once disclosed I lose my hold upon them, and if I were to try to enforce my claim, I should not go into court with clean hands. I was employed by Captain Bradshaw to trace his daughter, and when I told him of her death, I forgot to mention she had left a child. You see the public might take a wrong view of it, and it is even possible that I might lose my suit. Now with you I have none of these inconveniences. I know if you agree to pay me you will do so, because it is your interest. You know I shall keep my part of the bargain, because in the event of my opening my lips, the public would know that I have acted in a rather unprofessional and underhand way, and I should be spoken of in a way I should not like.”

“There is only one other point, Mr. Barton. How am I to know this boy is still alive?”

“Ah,” Mr. Barton said approvingly, “I do like to deal with a man with his head well on his shoulders. Now you have hit upon the only

weak point. I cannot prove it. I know the young man. I see him constantly, but without letting him know it. I cannot prove it to you without his having his suspicions awakened. How can I? You must take my word for it. I tell you he is alive. If any sort of oath will satisfy you, I will take it; I can't say more than that."

Fred Bingham rose.

"I can give you no answer now upon this. It is all new to me. I must think it over. I will call to-morrow about the same time." And he went out and got into the cab which had been waiting for him. "Back again to Harley Street, and drive quick."

Fred Bingham sat for some hours in his study that evening thinking over the new and unexpected impediment to his hopes. "To think of a grandson of the old man being alive just when everything looked so well. Was ever anything so frightfully unlucky?" However of course the question was, was it worth while to buy this man off or not? Fred Bingham had a clear head, and he considered every possible argument which could be urged upon either side. If he

refused to treat, and the heir was produced, what then? Captain Bradshaw had, he had heard, bitterly regretted his treatment of the mother, and would no doubt receive the boy with joy, and establish him as his heir. Of course he would leave a considerable sum to himself. He would feel bound to do so. Fred did not deceive himself, his uncle had never liked him as he had Frank; still he would leave him perhaps a third of the whole property. Suppose he bought this man off. The whole property was worth perhaps £150,000; suppose he gave £20,000 for silence, of course it would pay him well. But would that be the end of it? Would he find himself in this man's power if he did so? Yes, that was the real question. The agreement of course would be, that he would give a bond to pay a certain amount at his uncle's death, provided his uncle died ignorant of the existence of his grandson. Yes, that would be it. Then he would pay the money in cash, so that no trace of the transaction could be brought against him, and he would receive in exchange the bond. Would Barton have any hold upon him afterwards? He did not think so. He did see how he could have any. Suppose he

produced the grandson, what then? The will would have left the property to him, and the grandson would not have the slightest claim. Could Barton threaten to divulge the compact? He could deny that it ever existed, and Barton would have no proof to adduce. Over and over again he thought it over, and again and again he arrived at the same conclusion; the grandson could have no claim, Barton could hold no threat over his head. It was not so very bad after all. And with this conclusion he went to bed. The next day he called again at Mr. Barton's office. The interview was brief this time.

"How much do you want to hold your tongue?"

"The estate is worth £150,000 by what I hear. I will charge ten per cent."

"No," Fred Bingham said, "if this heir turns up I should get at least a third. I will give you ten per cent. upon the rest."

"Come," Mr. Barton said, "I have waited twenty years. I will take £12,000, not a farthing less."

"Very well," Fred Bingham said; "payable of course at my uncle's death, in the event of no nearer heir than myself appearing."

"Just so," Mr. Barton assented. "I have drawn up a bond on stamped paper up to £15,000, the figures are not put in. I will fill it up. 'I owe Robert Barton the sum of £12,000, which I agree to pay upon the death of Captain Bradshaw of Lowndes Square, providing that no nearer heir than myself to his property be found.'"

"But supposing," Fred Bingham said, "that my uncle quarrels with me and leaves his property to some one else?"

"I don't think you are likely to let him quarrel with you, Mr. Bingham; but should he do so, I rely upon you for your own sake to come here and tell me so frankly, and I will then restore you this paper, and produce the grandson."

Fred thought for a minute, and then said, "Yes, that would suit us both. There, I have signed the bond. Don't leave it about. Good morning, Mr. Barton."

CHAPTER II.

RUINED.

FRANK MAYNARD and his wife had finished breakfast. Frank was reading the "Times," and Kate had just brought down baby to play with. Frank suddenly gave a sharp exclamation as of sudden pain.

"What is it, Frank? What is the matter?"

Frank did not answer, his face had a look of utter dismay. "Send baby away." His wife rang the bell, and baby was sent up to the nursery.

"What is it, Frank dear? Something very bad? Tell me, dearest."

"Katie," Frank said, "if this is true, and there can be no doubt of it, we are ruined,—ruined, little woman."

"How, Frank?" his wife asked, unable to realise the misfortune, "how ruined, dear?"

"The great Indian Bank is broken, Katie—a complete smash."

"But, Frank, that is not altogether ruin; I have heard you say half your money was in the shares of that Bank, and the other half in the Bank of England, so only half is gone."

"No, Katie; the Bank has failed, the notice says, for an immense amount. Not one-third of the amount of the shares is called in; they will call up the rest now, and every farthing we have in the world will go, Katie. Oh, my poor little wife, my poor little wife!"

"My dearest, I have you left, so I am rich still. Do not give way, Frank, my own boy, you must not do that; we shall do very well somehow. Don't give way, Frank."

"My darling, I am only thinking of you. My little tender wife! To think how different your life will be."

"My dear Frank, I am not a hothouse flower—I am a little wild Irish girl; do you think I can't rough it as well as you? Why, Frank, I have been wondering lately whether I was always to lead such an idle, useless life as I have lately, with only baby to work for. I am sure I shall be

happier, Frank, and you know, dear, I can be useful, and perhaps earn money. I am sure I could give singing lessons."

"No, no, don't talk of it, Katie. I am not a man to give way. I was upset when I thought of you, dear, but I shall be only too proud and too glad to work for you; and as long as I have a pair of hands you may be sure, Katie, there is no need for you to talk of doing anything. Why, you little goose, have you no faith in me? I can do all sorts of things."

"Can you, Frank?" Kate said doubtfully; "well, we shall see, only let us trust each other, dear, and we can look the worst in the face."

"You are a darling, Katie, and I did not know what a treasure I had got. There, I feel all right again now, so I will go up to the city, perhaps things may not be as bad as they seem."

Frank, however, derived but little comfort from what he heard in town. The city was in a state of consternation. The break down of the Bank had been quite unexpected. The "Indian" had been looked upon as one of the most stable of the banks, and no one knew which might go next. The liabilities were described as tremendous. It was

certain that the shareholders would have to pay up to their last penny, and that even then the depositors would suffer greatly. Frank went back again to Thurloe Square greatly depressed.

"It is as bad as it can be, Katie," he said, in answer to his wife's questioning look when he entered. "It is no use deceiving ourselves. We shall be called upon to pay up every penny we have."

"Well, Frank," Kate said, simply, "we have the consolation that it is no fault of ours, and I am sure, dear, we shall be very happy wherever we are."

"I am sure we shall, Katie."

"I suppose we shall not have to turn out just yet, Frank?"

"Oh, no; there will be receivers appointed, and then the calls will be made. I should think it will be a couple of months before anything is settled."

"Ah! then, Frank, we need not worry ourselves; we shall have plenty of time to think over our plans."

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and Prescott entered.

"My dear Frank! My dear Kate"—for Frank and his wife had long since insisted that their friend should so call her—"I am sorry for this. I only heard it this afternoon, for I never look at the money article; so directly I could get away from court, I ran down to see you. This is, indeed, a bad affair."

"It can't be helped, Arthur," Kate said, cheerfully; "it's no use crying over spilt milk."

"Is it very bad, Frank?"

"Every penny we have in the world, Prescott. It's no use mincing matters."

Prescott sat down in consternation.

"Don't take it to heart, Arthur," Kate said; "you see we are very comfortable over it."

Prescott could not answer for some time. At last he said,—

"At least, Frank has one treasure left him."

"No nonsense, Arthur, else I shall be angry with you. Now please let us say no more about it till after dinner, and then we will hold a council. We will all go into Frank's snugery, and Frank shall smoke his big meerschaum; that always puts him in a good temper if he's ever so cross."

"You are an impudent puss, Katie; you know I never am cross."

"Oh, what fibs, Frank! You know you are a perfect bear sometimes. There, it is time for you to go upstairs, dinner will be ready in five minutes."

Kate left the room, her husband remaining behind to say to his friend,—

"Isn't she a brick, Prescott? Isn't she a downright little trump? I tell you what, Prescott, I never was sharp, but I managed somehow to choose the very best little woman in the world." And then he went upstairs after his wife.

At dinner, Prescott was the most silent of the party. Frank, in his pleasure and pride at his wife's stout-heartedness, was in really high spirits; and Katie having wisely turned the subject to travels, Frank rattled on about some adventures of his in Albania, and never came back again to England until the cloth was removed. Then Kate said,—

"Evan, put the wine and glasses in your master's study. Now, Frank, let us go there. I have ordered a fire to be lighted; it is more cheerful."

It was not until they had been seated for some minutes in Frank's smoking-room, and until Frank's meerschaum was fairly alight, that Prescott brought the conversation to present matters by asking,—

“Have you thought at all of going abroad, Frank?”

“Well, no,” Frank said. “I have not thought about it, but I should be open to any good appointment. Wolf killer to his Majesty the Czar of all the Russias, that would suit me capitally; or, if I could not get that, say ambassador to Madrid.”

“No, no, Frank; I am speaking seriously. I mean are you thinking of going at once? Hundreds of men in your position will go. The calls cannot be made for another month or six weeks; and there is nothing in the world to prevent your selling out of the Funds, and you would still have a good income for the Continent.”

Frank was silent. After a pause his wife spoke.

“But that would be cheating, would it not, Arthur?”

Prescott hesitated ; he was too straightforward to equivocate.

" I don't know that it would be absolutely cheating, Kate. Frank, you see, has lost a large sum by the fall of the Bank, and he may consider that he has a perfect right to save the rest if he can. Hundreds will do so, no doubt."

" Still, I suppose it is cheating all the same, Arthur ?" Kate said quietly. " If Frank's money properly belongs to the creditors of the Bank, it must be cheating if he goes off without paying it."

" Look here, Prescott," Frank said gravely ; " the interest and sympathy of the public will in this, as in all cases, be with the depositor, and not with the shareholder. In this case more than ordinarily so ; for the depositors in the ' Indian ' were old Indian officers, and their widows and children. The distress this smash will cause will be terrible ; and by what I hear, even after the greatest amount possible is wrung out of the shareholders, there will not be nearly enough to pay the depositors in full. Now, Prescott, I could stand a good deal of hardship and trial, but I could not stand being pointed at as a man

who had swindled—that would be the word, old man; there is no use mincing it—the widows and orphans who have been brought to want by the failure of the Bank. Even for Katie's sake I could not do that."

"You never thought we would, did you, Arthur?"

"No, I did not," Prescott answered. "I thought you would not, still I thought it right to suggest the thing before it is too late to be carried out. There is no doubt that a vast number of the unfortunate shareholders of the 'Indian' are preparing to spend the rest of their time on the Continent."

"It is very wicked of them," Katie said, earnestly.

"You are too hard, little woman," Frank said. "We must not judge other people by ourselves. There are circumstances under which I might myself do what they are doing. For me there would be no excuse for choosing a life of dishonest ease to setting-to at hard work of some sort. I am not yet seven-and-twenty; it is comparatively easy for me to begin life; but suppose I were an old man, with no possible kind of work

to turn to to earn a living, and with a wife of my own age, and a grown-up daughter or two, what then? What could I possibly do? You must remember our case is just as hard as that of the depositors. We bought shares at prices which paid five or six per cent.—no extraordinary interest—and we imagined that the money was absolutely safe. The depositors put their money in the Bank, and received interest for it. The Bank goes, from no fault of ours any more than of theirs. We lose every penny invested; they will receive, at any rate, some part of what they put in. I think, then, that an old man, in the case I have spoken of, would be morally justified in trying to save anything which may remain to him; but I do not think a young man would be.”

“Perhaps so,” Katie said, thoughtfully. “At any rate, I am glad you are a young man.”

“So am I, Kate,” Frank laughed. “There, Prescott, now we have quite decided upon that point, what is your next idea?”

“My dear Frank, I have no idea,” Prescott said; “it is for you to turn over in your mind what you think would suit you.”

“I was thinking of that as I came down from

town, Prescott," Frank said, disconsolately; "and upon my word I don't see what I am fit for. I write a rascally bad hand, and I am sure no one would take me as a clerk; I couldn't do anything in the literary line, to save my life. I can pull an oar you know; but then, fellows must be apprenticed before they can be watermen. Upon my word, the only thing I can see for myself," he said, ruefully, "is to go into the ring. I fancy there ain't above one or two men I couldn't hold my own with."

"A prizefighter, Frank! For shame! How dare you talk of such a thing?" Katie said, indignantly.

"He is only joking, Kate," Prescott said, although he saw that Frank had been half in earnest. "He is laughing at himself and us."

"Yes, I suppose it would not do," Frank said, with half a sigh; "but upon my word it is about all I am fit for."

"You see, Arthur, if Frank could get any little thing to do here, I could help. I could give lessons in singing. Besides, I can work very well. I am a wonderful hand at bonnets."

"You are a wonderful goose," Frank broke in,

seizing her and taking her from her chair on to his knees in his own easy chair, and checking her remonstrances with "Do as you are told, Katie, Prescott won't mind."

"Frank, I am really ashamed of you. I shall go away. I will, Frank ; please let me go."

"Not a bit of it, Katie. Here you are, and here you remain. Now, Prescott, please go on. It is agreed Katie is to give singing lessons, and I am to stay at home and nurse baby."

"Frank, that is unkind," Katie said, with the tears in her eyes. "Why should I not have the pleasure of helping too?"

"My own Katie," Frank said. "If the worst comes to the worst, you shall help ; but I hope that we shall hit on something better than that. Your proper work will be quite as hard, my pet ; what with baby and me you will have quite enough to do. I am afraid I shall be the most troublesome of the two. Now, Prescott, have you anything else to propose?"

"Nothing definite, Frank ; but if I were in your place, with your strength and energy, and with such a brave-hearted wife to back me and help me, I should emigrate. I am afraid there

is no sort of profession here for which you are fitted, but you are just the man to get on out there. A man who is strong and active, and is willing to turn his hand to anything, is safe to get on; and no kind of work is considered dishonouring out there."

"By Jove, Prescott, that would be just the thing for me, but it would be a rough life for poor Kate."

"Not rougher for me than for you, Frank. Besides, you know that I could really help you out there."

"I should think so, Kate; still I think if we really do make up our minds to it, it would be better for me to go out first to make a home for you, Katie—a rough home, dear, but still a home—and for you to stay for a little while with the Drakes."

"Look here, Frank," his wife said, with a tear glistening in her eye again, and a laugh that was nearly a cry, "I promise you solemnly, that if you once leave me behind, you leave me behind for good. You don't mean it, do you, husband?"

"No, darling; that is, I don't mean it, if you

don't want it. Well, Prescott, and which of the colonies do you think would suit me best?"

"Ah, that is a matter for great consideration, Frank. You must do nothing in a hurry. There are Canada, the Cape, the various Australian colonies, and New Zealand. You must get up the subject, and settle a little what line you mean to take up."

"By Jove, Prescott, it is a great idea, and has taken a tremendous weight off my mind. I did not see anything for it but the ring, you know, and Kate does not seem to fancy that. Well, we may consider the matter settled so far."

CHAPTER III.

PROFFERED AID.

ALICE HEATHCOTE had noticed that for a week past Captain Bradshaw had been unusually absent and moody. He had, however, upon the first occasion, when she had inquired if anything were the matter, answered so sharply, "Nothing, my dear, what makes you get such ideas in your head?" that she had not again approached the subject, and rather put it down to an access of her uncle's chronic complaint of liver.

They were one evening at a small dinner party at the house of an old friend. During a pause in the conversation at dessert, their host remarked, 'Shocking bad business that of the 'Indian,' Bradshaw.'

"Very," Captain Bradshaw said, curtly.

"You had no shares in it, I hope?"

"Not a penny," Captain Bradshaw answered.

"Bad business for your nephew Frank. I hear he's completely done for. Furniture advertised! Fine young fellow, sorry for him—haven't seen much of him of late. However, it doesn't matter so much in his case. He's got a good uncle, eh, Bradshaw?"

"Frank and myself have had a difference," Captain Bradshaw said stiffly; "I have not spoken to him since his marriage."

"God bless my soul!" the host said, in much confusion; "I beg your pardon—never dreamt of it—never, upon my life. You have been away so long, you see."

"It is of no consequence," Captain Bradshaw said, calmly; "we will change the subject."

Alice Heathcote had heard all this in silence; she felt that she was very pale, and was grateful when the hostess, to break the awkward silence that ensued, rose as Captain Bradshaw finished speaking, and gave the signal for the ladies to retire. Alice took up a book as an excuse for being silent, sat down upon an ottoman apart from the others, and thought over what she had heard. Frank ruined. The furniture to be sold. Was it possible? What would Frank do? What

could he do ? Frank had been very wicked, very, very wrong, but still he had for many years been her playmate and brother. Could it be possible that he was absolutely ruined, had nothing to live on ? What would he do ? and with a wife, too, the wife of whom he used to talk so lovingly and proudly to her ; and a little child, too. No, no, whatever Frank had done he must not want. While she was so rich, Frank at any rate should never be poor ; but how could she do it ? Alice was still thinking over this when the gentlemen came upstairs. The host came and took his seat on the ottoman by her.

“ My dear Miss Heathcote, I am very sorry I made such a terrible mistake at dinner. But I had no idea of it. I understand now why Maynard came here so seldom—dropped our acquaintance, in fact. I was rather hurt about it, as an old friend, and that is why I did not ask him and his wife to meet you to-day. He had refused me twice. But what is this all about ? I always made sure he was to be Captain Bradshaw’s heir.”

“ I cannot tell you what it is about, Mr. Pierce,” Alice said, simply, “ but I am afraid it

will never be made up. Please tell me is he really ruined ? ”

“ I am afraid so ; in fact I am sure of it. He himself once mentioned to me that he was a large shareholder in the ‘ Indian,’ and I happened to meet him the day before yesterday, and as an old friend, you know, spoke to him about it, and said I hoped he was not hit hard. ‘ I am, indeed,’ he said, ‘ about as hard as can be. When the calls are made, every penny I have goes.’ ”

“ Did he seem very low spirited, Mr. Pierce ? ”

“ Oh, no,” her host said ; “ he seemed just as usual ; spoke out in his cheery sort of way, as if it was a matter of no very great importance to himself that he was talking about ; and I naturally supposed, as I had always looked upon him as Captain Bradshaw’s heir, that he was by no means anxious about the future. And you say that there is no chance of the quarrel being made up ? I am sorry, indeed ! such a nice lad as he was, and such a fine fellow as he had grown up. If there is anything I can do, Miss Heathcote ; if as an old friend, I can try to bring matters round, you may rely upon me.”

"Thank you," Alice said; "but it would not be of the slightest use. It would make matters worse, indeed. No, nothing can be done."

Another of the gentlemen now coming up, the conversation was changed, and shortly afterwards Captain Bradshaw's carriage was announced. Neither spoke upon their way home, and the only words exchanged as they separated upon the stair, were "Good night, uncle;" "Good night, Alice. You look tired." The next morning Alice looked pale and ill, but her uncle made no observation. They were silent at breakfast, at last Alice said resolutely,—

"Uncle, you will not be angry with me?"

"I don't know, Alice; I hope not."

"I have always been a good girl, Guardy, haven't I?"

"Yes, Alice, a very good girl."

"I have never teased you, or wanted to have my own way, have I?"

"Well, Alice, you have not teased me more than was reasonable that a young woman should do, and I don't know that I ever particularly wanted you to go any way you did not yourself like."

Captain Bradshaw spoke playfully, but he

quite guessed what Alice was going to say, and was fully prepared to resist her.

"Uncle, you had heard before of Frank having lost all his money?"

"Yes, I had heard it before, Alice," Captain Bradshaw said, and then muttered to himself, "and serve him right too."

"Uncle," Alice said, pleadingly, "can you bear to think of Frank with his young wife and a baby being in want, in absolute want?"

"He must do as other people do, my dear, and work for his living. He is strong enough."

Alice saw that it was useless trying to move her uncle, and that if she persisted he would only get into a passion, and make what she had quite resolved to do the more difficult.

"Uncle Harry, you know that I quite think with you about Frank. Quite agree with you that he can never be to us what he formerly was, without he explains and expresses repentance and sorrow for the past; and if I know anything at all of Frank, if he could not, or would not, do it when you first wrote to him, and when he was comfortably off, he will not do it now."

"I quite agree with you there, Alice."

"Well, uncle, I don't wish to influence you at all, but for the sake of old times, for the sake of the boy I loved as a girl, I will not let him want. I believe, uncle, that I have absolute control over my fortune?"

"Yes, Miss Heathcote," her uncle said, coldly, "I am sorry to say that you have."

"Oh, uncle," Alice said, bursting into tears, "don't speak so to me; you are the only person I have to love in the world, but I must help Frank."

"Well, my dear," the old man said, more kindly, "have your own way. 'A wilful woman,' you know; but mind, I don't oppose you simply because I can't. If I could, I would. I tell you that fairly; but if in spite of that you choose to have your own way, I shall not quarrel with you about it. I have had quarrelling enough in my time, God knows, and I am not going to quarrel with you."

"Thank you, uncle," Alice said, brightening up. "I am sorry I can't do as you want me. I am really. But I cannot help it. I have fifty thousand pounds, haven't I?"

“ Yes, Alice.”

“ If I want to get some of it—and I do want—how do I set about it ? ”

“ The money is invested in my name, Alice, as your trustee. It was so put when you were a child, and has never been altered, because I was able to sign [for] your dividends without troubling you. If you want any of it out, you give me authority, I write to a broker, and give him authority, and he manages it.”

“ Will you please to write, uncle, and tell him to sell out ten thousand pounds? Don’t look angry, uncle, please don’t.”

“ Well, Alice, I will do as you desire me ; but mind, Frank won’t take it.”

“ Oh, uncle, don’t say that,” Alice cried ; indeed she had worried so much over the difficulty of persuading her uncle to consent to her wishes that she had never thought of the probability or otherwise of Frank’s accepting it.

“ Well, do you think it likely yourself, Alice ? ”

“ But he mustn’t know it comes from me, uncle.”

“ Well, my dear, have your own way ; I will

carry out your wishes as you desire; but, mark my words, Frank won't take it. Frank may have done a blackguard dishonourable action once, but we can't have been altogether mistaken in him. We cast him off when he was well off, he will not receive assistance from us now."

"No, he would not for himself, uncle, but he has others to think of now."

"Very well, my dear," Captain Bradshaw said, coldly; "try."

Two or three days after this, as Frank and his wife were sitting by the fire after tea, talking about their now rapidly approaching change, a letter was brought in. Frank opened it. He gave a low whistle of surprise.

"What is it, Frank?"

"Messrs. Hankey beg to inform Mr. Frank Maynard that a sum of ten thousand pounds (£10,000) has been paid in to open an account in his name. Will he please to give an early call at the Bank to complete the necessary formalities. Messrs. Hankey are not at liberty to state the name of the person by whom the money has been paid in."

"What do you think of that, Katie? Of

course it comes from Captain Bradshaw. I am surprised, I confess. I did not think he would have given in."

Kate looked thoughtfully into the fire.

"Are you sure he has given in, Frank?"

"Well, I suppose so, Katie. There is no one else among my circle of acquaintances who is likely to have paid anonymously ten thousand pounds on my account. Mind, I am not saying that we are going to take it. That's a thing to be talked over. Unless he apologises amply and fully for his conduct, of course it would be out of the question; and even then——"

Katie glanced up at her husband. He evidently had no thought that the offer could have come from anyone else. Katie's woman's instinct had at once guessed the truth, and a little jealous pang had shot through her that another woman should help her husband. To help him with money, too! As she thought of Alice's proud, cold face as she had passed Frank in the street only a month or two before, a feeling of anger took the place of jealousy.

"Don't you see, Frank, it is not your uncle, it is Miss Heathcote has sent you this."

"Do you think so, Kate? Well, it is likely enough; she was always the kindest-hearted girl possible."

His wife pouted her lip a little, and her colour rose.

"Well, Frank, of course you know her better than I do. I only saw her once, and after that I would rather go out as a servant than take money from her. I call it a wilful impertinence, Frank. I call it a downright insult. A woman, whom you have known from a child, and who cut you dead in the streets the other day, to send you money now you are poor! Frank, it is a downright insult," and the blood mounted in Kate's cheek, and her eyes flashed very indignantly.

Frank looked at her, first in surprise, then in amusement.

"Come here, Katie." His wife did not move. "Come here, Katie; do as you are told; come and let me look at you."

"No, Frank, I'm not going to be talked over," Kate said, sturdily; but she came nevertheless.

"You jealous little woman. You have never

forgiven Alice for being silly enough to care for me years ago."

"Yes, I have forgiven her, Frank. There was nothing to forgive in it. She had just as much right to fall in love with you as I had. I would have loved her very much for your sake if she would have let me. I should not have minded her doing as her guardian told her, and ceasing to see you; but I do mind—yes, Frank, I do mind—her passing you as she did. She looked hard and cold, not the face of some one who dared not look, but the face of one who would not; and then now to send you money out of pity, just as she might give to a beggar in the streets; no wonder I am angry, Frank," and Katie looked very indignant indeed.

"There is a good deal in what you say, Katie, and no doubt I ought to be more angry than I am. I hardly know why I am not, except I am essentially an easy going man. Very likely I should be angry if I were in your place. You do not know Alice Heathcote as I do. I have known her since she was a little girl, and I loved her as a sister, Katie. You must remember that. A man may be blind to the faults of one he loves

as a wife, but men are always hard upon their sisters. Now I looked upon Alice as a sister, and I know she is a very true, very affectionate, very thoughtful girl, not given to sudden likes and dislikes, or to be moved by sudden impulses. I am certain then, Kate, as certain as I sit here, that some extraordinary mistake, at the nature of which I cannot even guess, has arisen. Alice might obey Captain Bradshaw, and hold no communication with me, but she would never, I would wager my life, look cold or hard when she met me. If Alice Heathcote no longer loves me as a brother, it is because she has in some strange way been morally convinced that I am not worthy of her esteem; and if I know Alice—and I think I do know her—it has cost her no slight pain before she came to the conclusion."

Kate was softened. "Perhaps you are right, Frank, but you must make allowances for me. You know it is galling to a wife that her husband should be assisted by a woman who used to love him. No one would like that, Frank. You know you would not like it, now, if anyone who was once in love with me—and you don't know how much I used to flirt before I knew you—

were to come forward now and offer me money—especially if he had, you considered, behaved very badly in other respects.”

“No, Katie,” Frank said heartily, “I certainly should not. I should consider it to be a confoundedly impertinent interference, and should be monstrously inclined to punch his head for him.”

Kate laughed happily. “Oh, you easy-going man! There, Frank, now you have granted that, and so excused me, let us talk rationally about it. Do you mean to take the money or not?”

“Of course not, Katie; I never dreamt of it.”

“Why didn’t you say so at once then, you tiresome boy, and not tease me into a rage?”

“You never gave me a chance, Katie,” Frank laughed. “No, dear, I would not have taken it from Captain Bradshaw, much less from Alice. Although I should like to stay in England for your sake,—it will be a hard life for you abroad, little woman.”

“That’s an old subject,” Kate said, cheerfully. “Now, Frank, get out your books again, and let

us go into the intricate question of where we shall go."

"We have quite decided against the United States and Canada, haven't we?"

"Yes, Frank. I should not like to be among people who would talk of us in a contemptuous sort of way as Britishers; and I can't bear cold. It lies between the Cape, Australia, and New Zealand." And so they took out their books again, and studied maps, and the price of land, and the question of provisions and labour, until it was time to go to bed. The next day Frank happened to be going near Mr. Bingham's office. He liked his uncle, but he did not see much of him, for Mr. Bingham was a good deal away, and their lives lay in completely different circles. They had met once before since the failure of the Bank, so that Mr. Bingham was acquainted with the state of Frank's affairs.

"And so, Frank, you are still talking of going abroad?"

"Yes," Frank said; "there is nothing else that I can see for it. I confess, that for myself I rather like the thought, it is just the sort of life to suit me; but my wife will, I know, be sorry

to leave England. She is very cheerful, you know, and so on, but I can see she dreads it a little. It is so different for a woman, you see, to what it is for a man."

"I've been thinking, Frank, that it is a pity you don't make up your mind to set to at work in England. Fred and I have plenty of work all over the country; we can't be everywhere at once, and it would be a very great advantage to us to have some one we can rely upon as ourselves. Of course you don't understand engineering work, but for earthworks, for example, mere pick and barrow work, the men only want a good ganger, and the master's eye over them. I have just got a contract for twenty miles of railway in Yorkshire; now if you like to come down, I will make a fair calculation, and give you the earthwork. The great thing with navvies is for them to like the man they work for. You are just the sort of man they would be likely to get on with. You will save me one or two inspectors, and this sort of work is always done cheaper by piece work. It is a good thing to get into, you know, Frank; you would not perhaps make very much the first job, but you would learn

the business, and be able to do well afterwards."

Frank was silent a short time.

"I am very much obliged to you, uncle, and personally I should like nothing better. In fact it is just the sort of thing to suit me. It is your contract, uncle, not Fred's? because, you see, I don't mind working under you or any man older than myself, but I should not like working under a fellow of my own age, especially a cousin."

"It is mine, Frank. Between ourselves, I have determined to keep this matter in my own hands. Fred and I don't always agree."

"But to take a contract for work of that sort requires capital, does it not, uncle?"

"Very little, Frank. You see the men are paid once a week, or once a fortnight, as the case may be, and the work is measured up, and paid for by the contractor once a month. So in fact you would only require a fortnight's pay for the men. Of course at first the work begins upon a small scale, as it is impossible, until the cuttings are fairly opened, to put very many men on. Two or three hundred pounds would be enough for a beginning."

"I could manage that," Frank said. "I have spoken to the official assignee of the Bank, and have told him I am ready to give up every halfpenny I have to meet the call, but that I must have the proceeds of my furniture to pay other little debts, and so on, and I expect after I have cleared them off to have a hundred and fifty or two hundred pounds left. If I had been going to emigrate, I should have asked my wife's friends to have helped me with as much more. One can ask friends to help when one is going abroad for good. Well, uncle, of course I cannot decide at once, but I will let you know to-morrow or next day."

"Do, Frank; it is a good thing to get into, I can assure you, and as we are likely to have plenty of work, I think it is a really good opening; far better than going out to the colonies."

Frank went round to Prescott's room. "Prescott, old man, I want you to come round and dine this evening; there is something I want to ask the opinion of you and Katie about."

Prescott came down accordingly. Frank did not broach the subject until after dinner was over.

“ Now, Katie, I want your opinion upon an offer I have had to-day, and I have asked Prescott down on purpose to take part in our councils. So I will state the case. Prescott shall give his opinion, and you shall decide. I have had an offer to stay in England.” His wife looked up eagerly. “ For myself, I am ready either to refuse or accept the offer with equal willingness. It is the sort of work that would suit me, and which I should like—in fact it is a good deal like the work I should have abroad, an active out-of-door life. My uncle Bingham has asked me if I would like to go down to undertake the earthworks, that is the looking after the navvies on a line he has got the contract for in Yorkshire. I should take the sub-contract of the earthworks, and as he says, learn the business. In time I should be capable of undertaking larger and more important works, and he has plenty of opportunities for pushing me on. Now, what do you think of it ? ” Neither Kate nor Prescott answered. “ Now, Prescott, what is your opinion of it ? ”

“ Well, Frank, it is a difficult matter to give an opinion upon. I was always in favour of your emigrating, for the simple reason that I did not

see anything here which was likely to suit you. But I never disguised from myself that you both, your wife particularly, would have to encounter many hardships. It appears to me that this may really lead to something. Railway contracting is a profitable business, and if your uncle really chooses to push you, it is as he says a good opening. Now in Australia or the Cape, taking a farm of five hundred acres, as you think of doing, and getting it into cultivation, is the work of years. There is no future in it. You will no doubt make a living, even a comfortable competency, but there seems little chance of your ever making enough to come back to England to live upon your means. There is another thing to be said. If this should turn out badly, if you should lose what little money you take down with you, your friends will all help, and you can but go to Australia after all."

"Now, what do you say, Katie?"

"Oh, I quite agree with Arthur, Frank. I don't want to go away and never see our friends again."

"Very well," Frank said, "then that's settled; hurrah for railroads!"

In another week the sale took place at the

Maynards. A sale is not a picturesque sight, with its dirty Jew brokers, its unwashed hangers-on, its close, crowded atmosphere, its voluble auctioneer, and its eager bidders. But it is a sad business for those who look in the slightest degree below the surface. Here are the ruins of a household. Almost every one of the articles so carelessly examined, so slightly looked at, so jeeringly commented upon, has its own little history, its reminiscences, which make it sacred to those who have to part with it. The little child's chair, the water-colour drawing which your wife gave you ere yet she was your wife, the chair she always sat in—these and a hundred other things are sacred relics to you, while they are caviare to the world around.

Frank and Kate had gone into lodgings upon the previous day, having paid off the servants and handed over the house to the broker. With one of their followers only had they not parted. Frank had called Evan in and said,—

“Evan, here are your wages up to next week. That will make the month from the time I gave you notice. I am sorry to part with you, lad, but of course it can't be helped. Whenever you

want a character, you have only to refer to me."

Evan made no sign of taking up the money. "Please, Mr. Maynard," he said, "I'm not going."

"But you must go, Evan. I am a poor man, and can't keep a servant any longer. I am going down to work on a railway."

"Well, Mr. Maynard, I shall go down too. I can get some work on the line, I dare say, and I can come in to help of an evening. After what you have done for me, sir, after what you did for Aunt Bessy, I'm not going to leave you now. Lor, sir, mother won't take me in if I was to go home and tell her I'd left you. No, sir, where you go, I go. If I can't be your servant, I can do a few odd jobs, and make myself useful between times."

And so, as Evan positively refused to be separated from his old master, it was arranged that he should go down and work on the line. A fortnight afterwards Frank and his wife started for Yorkshire.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOWING THE HOOF.

LANDFARN is a quiet place in South Yorkshire, and may be rather called a large village than a town, with a semi-rural, semi-agricultural population. The staple of its manufactures is, of course, wool; and there are five or six flannel factories, either on the main stream, the Farn, or nestled up in little side valleys upon its tributaries. The country round is undulating and pretty. Frank's first care upon arriving was to look out for a house, and he was fortunate in finding a pretty, furnished cottage, with a garden and paddock, upon a hill side at a little more than half a mile from the town. It had been standing empty for some time, and the rent was only thirty-five pounds a year. In a week from their arrival, the Maynards were installed in their new home, engaging the old woman who

had previously been there as servant, and taking a young girl from Landfarn as nurse for baby. Kate was charmed with their new abode. It was so quiet and pretty, so enclosed in trees, that it seemed quite shut out from the world. Indeed it would have been better, as she afterwards acknowledged, had there been fewer trees, for they kept the house damp, and in winter the paper had an awkward habit of peeling off, and everything had to be taken out of boxes and drawers once a fortnight for a thorough drying and airing. As for the garden, it was so steep, that walking in it was a difficulty; and from a seat at the upper end, one could almost look down the chimneys. But, indeed, there was a really beautiful view from the garden. Below was the broad valley, with the Farh winding backwards and forwards; the opposite hills were covered to their very summits with trees; away to the right lay Landfarn itself, with its light smoke curling up, and its church watching over it. Altogether they were very fortunate, and were ready to be pleased with everything. The only drawback to their house was, that it was situated on the side of the town opposite to that

from which the new line was to start. Mr. Bingham had taken a large house upon the other side of Landfarn, and came down with Mrs. Bingham and the girls a day or two after Frank had got fairly established. A day or two after, Frank went with him over the line, at portions of which men were already at work fencing it in, and Mr. Bingham explained the plans to Frank, and gave him a few ideas as to his new work.

“When do we begin, uncle?”

“In a week I hope to cut the first sod, Frank, and then we shall go on in earnest. It will be a good plan for you to take four men, and to dig holes five or six feet deep in the principal cuttings to see what nature the ground is; we are sure to have plenty of offers from small contractors, accustomed to this country, and we shall get a fair idea of the value of the work.”

For the next few days Frank was very busy, and in high spirits. It wanted only two days to the day fixed for the commencement of the work, when Frank, on going down to the Binghams, found Mr. Bingham looking very serious.

“Anything the matter, uncle?”

“Yes, indeed, Frank. A very serious affair

indeed. It seems that the South-west Yorkshire Railway got a Bill two years ago for a branch from here to Leeds, and the first two miles run over exactly the same ground that we do. Everyone thought they had dropped the line from want of capital, but to-day they have got their men at work, fencing. Of course I shall knock the fences down. It will be arranged, no doubt, but it must cause a good deal of delay. I am going up to town at once to see the directors."

This was, indeed, serious news for Frank. Mr. Bingham had other works in hand, and to him it was a matter of comparative indifference, but to Frank it was of vital importance.

"This is indeed a bad business, uncle. Do you think the delay is likely to last long?"

"I can't tell you, Frank. You know now as much as I do. I will write to you from London as soon as we get legal opinions on the subject."

Frank went up to the cottage very disheartened. He told his wife what had taken place.

"Oh, Frank, this is unfortunate. What had we better do, dear? Don't you think we had better go up to London again at once, and carry out our former plan?"

"Well, Katie, at any rate we had better wait a short time until we hear from Mr. Bingham. You see we have taken this house for six months certain, and we have had all the expense of coming down here. It will have made a large hole in our little capital, dear."

"Yes, Frank; but it would be better to put up with that than to wait here, spending more and doing nothing."

"So it would, Katie; but at any rate we had better wait for another fortnight; by that time we shall see whether it is going on or not."

It was nearly a fortnight before an answer came from Mr. Bingham, and it was highly satisfactory. Counsel were of opinion that the other party had not a leg to stand upon. That they ought to have opposed when the Bill was before the House; and that the last Act overrode the former one. An early day was named for hearing the case, and there was no doubt that the work would begin immediately after.

Both Frank and Kate agreed that there was nothing for it but to wait. In the meantime they had got to know the few gentry of the place. Mr. Larpent, who lived in the great house down

on the hill-side below their cottage, and who owned some mines at a short distance from Landfarn. Mr. Larpent was a shrewd practical man, and his wife was very friendly with Mrs. Frank; as for Fanny Larpent, their daughter, she and Kate soon became as intimate as sisters; and Frank laughed and said, "If he had not married Katie, he should certainly have fallen in love with Fanny Larpent."

The doctor, too, soon became a great ally of Frank's. A short, stout, hearty man, with a fund of good sense and fun. There were a few other families in the place itself or in its immediate neighbourhood, the usual *entourage* of all small country towns. The clergyman, the lawyer, a half-pay officer or two, a few small landed proprietors, and three or four of the owners of the principal woollen factories. Some of these called upon the Maynards very shortly after their arrival, and most of the others, influenced by the favourable reports of the new comers, soon followed their example. Landfarn rather prided itself upon being a sociable place, and there were many quiet tea drinkings, and whist parties, and musical evenings. Altogether

Frank and his wife liked the place very much. In the meantime, the South-west Yorkshire began work upon their part of the line beyond the disputed point, and Frank, making friends with the inspector, passed much of his time with him, watching the works, and learning his new business. Upon this line Evan went to work, and Frank saw but little of him now, for it was too far off to return at night to work. Weeks passed, the news from London was always favourable; Mr. Bingham wrote that the work must begin before long. This delay was very wearying to both Kate and Frank—more, perhaps, to her than to him, for Frank was essentially an easy going man, while Kate was as decidedly an impetuous woman. Sometimes Mr. Bingham came down, sometimes Fred, but the visits of the former decreased in number, while those of his son became more frequent. Constantly Frank was tempted to give it up, and as often some unusually cheering piece of news would come, and they would decide that it would be madness after waiting so long to throw it up, and to lose the benefit of all these months of delay, and of all the money that they had spent. Six months passed

over thus—six weary anxious months—and then arrived the welcome news that both parties had agreed upon a compromise, and that work was certain to begin in another month at the latest. With this joyful intelligence, however, came the news that the contract had changed hands, and that Fred Bingham was to be the contractor in place of his father. Frank was very much vexed at this change. He had always liked his uncle, and had perfect faith in his good intentions towards him. Fred he objected to work under, as being of his own age; besides, stoutly as he had always supported him, he had doubts he could not entirely suppress of his good faith, besides which Fred had been decidedly cool during his visits to Landfarn. However, it was too late to draw back now. The hundred and fifty pounds which Frank had brought down with him were gone now, scarcely a pound remained, and there was nothing to do for it but to make the best of matters. At last the news came that the compromise was arranged, that the South-west Yorkshire was to make the disputed piece of work, and that both companies were to have the right of using it. Fred Bingham was to come

down with his wife at the end of the week, and work was to begin at once from the point beyond the junction. This time there were no more delays; and upon the day appointed, Fred Bingham came down and took possession. The same evening, Frank went down to see him. Fred was in his smoking-room.

"Well, Fred," Frank began, "I congratulate you as well as myself, that all this weary delay is over at last. It has been a terrible trial."

"Yes," Fred said coolly, "it has been a nuisance."

"I suppose we are to begin at once, Fred?"

"Yes," Fred Bingham answered. "On Monday. I have got several offers for the cuttings."

"But, Fred, it was arranged between your father and myself that I was to have all the earth-work."

"Ah," Fred said, "very likely. But the old man has nothing to do with it now, and I am not bound by any foolish arrangements he may have made."

Frank grew very white, but he controlled himself. "And do you mean to say, Fred, putting aside the fact of our being cousins, that after my coming down here at your father's wish, after

being here all these months, receiving not a penny, —while your clerks and men down here have been paid just as usual—until every penny I have in the world is gone—do you mean to say you are going to throw me over now?"

"I am not going to throw you over, as you call it," Fred said; "if you are ready to do the work on the same terms as other people, you can have it. These are the offers I have had." And he pushed some letters across to Frank. They were illiterate, badly spelt epistles, evidently from working men.

"The work cannot possibly be done on the terms, Fred," Frank said when he had glanced through them. "The ground is tough blue clay with stones, just the same that they have got on the other line. In many cases you must use powder to it. These men are mere wandering navvies. They will make money as long as they are merely at work on the easy surface stuff, and then when they find it doesn't pay will go off without paying their men. I will take the work on the terms which any responsible person is willing to tender for it at."

"Yes," Fred Bingham said, "but the respon-

sible person would find money, and not call upon me the first Saturday for the men's pay. You tell me yourself you have no money."

For a moment the impulse upon Frank Maynard to seize his cousin by the throat and to thrash him to within an inch of his life almost overpowered him. But the thought of his wife sitting at home, of the bills he already owed in the town, of the house on his hands for another quarter, and that he was actually without a penny, rushed upon him, and with a tremendous effort he kept down his passion.

Fred continued. "In some respects I would rather keep the work in my own hands. Now what I think of doing is this. I will take the highest of these estimates, sixpence a yard for clay, and a shilling for rock. Now you shall work the men just as if they were your own. I shall pay them. If there is any profit at the end, that is if we have done the work under this price, we will divide it between us, and in the meantime you shall draw two pounds a week, to be charged of course against the work. What do you say to that?" Fred spoke cheerfully as if he were making a most liberal offer.

"I am perfectly certain, Fred, that the work cannot be done at the price. Still, if those are your only terms, I must accept them. I have no choice."

"And mind, Frank, work is to be work. I shall expect you to do just the same as any other inspector would do. To be on the work before the men begin at six in the morning, and to be there till they knock off at night."

Again Frank had a very hard struggle with himself, his teeth were set hard, and the veins on his forehead stood out like cords. But he only said, "Of course I shall do my work like other people. Good night."

Fred Bingham looked after him for some time with his smile upon his lips. "I'll make you smart before I've done with you, my fine fellow." And then he went out into the night air.

"Oh, Katie," Frank said to himself as he shut the door, "you little know what I have stood to-night for your sake. My God, my God! what is to become of us? To think that I should have been such a gross idiot as to believe all these years in this infernal scoundrel. What have I done to make him hate me like this? God

knows I have always taken his part since he was a boy, have quarrelled for him, have supported him against Prescott and Alice and Kate and all, and now at last, when he knows I am helplessly in his power, bound hand and foot, he treats me as if— Good Heavens! I shall go mad. Oh, if I could only get out of this, only carry out our old plan. But there, it is too late now. At any rate I must stop for a time; if the worst comes to the worst, Katie and I must put our pride in our pockets, and ask the Drakes to lend us enough to take us abroad.”

“ Frank, you are dreadfully pale,” Kate said anxiously, when he came in.

“ I knocked against the gate in the dark,” Frank said, deceiving his wife for the first time, “ and shook myself a bit. I shall be all right presently.”

“ Where did you hurt yourself, Frank ? ”

“ In the side, but it is no odds, it was the shock more than anything. The gate was half open, and I ran against the end. It’s really nothing, Katie.”

“ Well, Frank, and is it all right ? Is the work to begin at last ? ”

"Yes, darling; thank God, it begins on Monday."

"And there is no hitch? nothing disagreeable with Fred?"

"No, Kate; we have mutually agreed as to the terms of the contract. I am to do it at so much a yard, and as each cutting is done, I am to be paid the profit, and in the meantime I am to draw two pounds a week."

"Two pounds! that seems very little, Frank?"

"Well, it can hardly be termed wealth, Katie, but our expenses here are very small, and I dare say we shall manage well enough. Besides, as each cutting is finished, there will be the profit."

"It is only a pound a week to live on, Frank. The rent and Hannah and nurse come to the other pound."

"Well, we must try, Katie, and if we can't make it do, I must ask Fred to let me draw a little more. I did not wish to press matters the first time, you see. He will soon see how useful I shall be, and then no doubt there will be no difficulty about arranging to draw more each week. At any rate, thank God, Katie, I am going to earn something at last."

CHAPTER V.

FINDING A CLUE.

AND so Frank set to work. He was not a man to do things by halves, and threw himself with all his energies into it. Every morning soon after half-past four he was up ; after he was out of bed he lit a small spirit-lamp, made his coffee, and had his early breakfast when he was dressed. Then, at a little after five he started for his three mile walk to his work, at which he always arrived before six. Then a turn along the line and back again to his starting-point by half-past eight, when the men stopped work for half an hour to breakfast. Then Frank would go into a little turf hut by the side of the cutting and eat, with an appetite sharpened by the keen morning air, the breakfast he had brought with him. Another turn up and down the line, and then, at twelve o'clock, he would have a fire lit in

his hut and warm up his dinner ; then up and down again until six, or, if the men were working overtime, until eight, and then three miles home again. It was very hard work, and Frank had sometimes to sit down by the roadside of that last steep pull up to his cottage. Once there, however, he was strong and cheery again, for the bright face was always on the look out for him, and his slippers, and his easy coat, and his hot water, and his tea, and the cheerful smile, better than all, were sure to be ready for him. Few of his old London friends would have known Frank now, in his rough shooting-coat, his gaiters and navy boots, and the beard which he had allowed to grow since he came down to Yorkshire. During this time Frank and his wife suffered far more for each other than for themselves. Kate, bright and cheerful as she was when Frank was with her, fretted much when he was away. More especially of an evening she would picture him to herself, toiling along the dark road, so tired, that as she well knew he could hardly drag himself along. Frank, too, worried about his wife ; for himself, hard, terribly hard, as his work was, he did not so much mind ; it was the thought of

her sitting at home by herself all those long hours worrying about him which troubled him. His only satisfaction was that he was doing his best, his very best, to earn her a living. Frank's was immensely popular with his men. Some men have the knack of getting on with working men, and this knack Frank possessed in the highest degree. He had a cheery word and a ready jest for each when he passed him. He was strict with his work, and soon thoroughly understood it, but the men knew he never blamed unless blame was really deserved, and they looked up to the "gaffer," as Frank was termed, with all the rough affection of which navvies are eminently capable. At first one or two rough fellows, not knowing their man, had ventured to be insolent when Frank reproved them, and were summarily dismissed. When they had been paid, he told them that now they were no longer in his service, they were his equals, and could treat him as such; and so, taking off his coat, he gave them a tremendous thrashing. After that he had no trouble whatever; and the rest of his men liked him all the better for it.

A few days after work had begun, Katie had

gone down to call upon Mrs. Fred. Mrs. Fred had been very glad to see her, and promised to come up in a few days; but her husband, when he heard of Kate's visit, told his wife that he did not choose that she should visit his inspectors' wives, and that he forbade positively her going up to the cottage, a prohibition which his wife, though with many quiet tears, was forced to obey. Fred Bingham by no means made himself popular with the people of the neighbourhood, and after a time they ceased to call. Frank, although reticent to Kate as to his grievances, was outspoken enough to the doctor and his other friends, and Fred Bingham got a bad name in the place. Although he himself did not care about visiting, it annoyed him exceedingly on Sundays, when they came out of church, to see that Frank and his wife were greeted warmly by all the people of the place, while they merely drew by to let himself and his wife pass with a distant bow. Frank and his wife soon found that twenty shillings a week was an impossible sum to live on, and in spite of her utmost economy, the bills accumulated in a way which caused Kate many a

weary hour of anxiety. Indeed, they could not have held on had it not been that three times they received assistance. The first was when their second child was born, about five months after the work began. When the event was approaching, Frank had written to Prescott, and his friend had sent him twenty pounds. The second help was a week or two after baby's advent, when a letter arrived from Mrs. Drake, who was quite in ignorance of the state of their circumstances, and sent a present of twenty pounds also for christening things for the new comer. The third present came three months later, and for this they had to thank, though unwittingly, Fred Bingham.

Fred had been up in London, and, as was his invariable custom upon these occasions, had called upon his uncle. Captain Bradshaw was out, but Miss Heathcote was at home. Now, between Alice and Fred there was a feud which had existed ever since she had rejected him. He had never forgiven her for refusing him, and indeed, next only to Frank Maynard, hated her beyond any living thing. Alice, on her part, despised him. She had looked upon him with absolute con-

tempt, not unmingled with fear, since the occasion when he had taunted her with her love for Frank. It was only for Captain Bradshaw's sake that she bore with him, but so great was her love for her uncle that she would not, by look or word, say anything before or to him to shake his confidence in Fred. She knew he liked Fred; not as he had loved Frank, but with a passive sort of liking, and that he looked upon him as his only possible heir. Fred perfectly understood her motive for silence, and showed himself to her as he really was, in a way he did not often show himself to any one except his wife. Upon the present occasion he went in.

"How are you getting on down in Yorkshire, Fred?"

"Pretty well, Alice; nothing to grumble about."

"Fred," Alice said, "I have been waiting to get an opportunity of speaking to you alone. I want to ask you how Frank Maynard is getting on; I have no one to ask but yourself."

"I know it is an interesting subject," Fred sneered.

Alice's eyes flashed.

"Yes," he continued, "you need not look angry, Alice. He is getting on as well as he could expect, I suppose."

"And how well is that, Fred?"

"Well," said Fred, carelessly, "he is a sort of inspector."

"And what are an inspector's duties, Fred? What does he have to do?"

"Well, he has to be on the work at six o'clock—unfortunately he lives three miles away, but that's his business—he has to be there at six and he has to look after the men all day till six in the evening; that is, if the men ain't working overtime—if they are he is there till eight."

"And has he a horse, Fred?"

"A horse!" Fred said, scornfully; "no, thank you, I don't have my inspectors riding about on horseback."

"Do you mean to say, Fred, that Frank Maynard has to walk to work three miles of a morning and back at night, and to be on his feet all day?"

"Of course," Fred said; "what would you have?"

Alice bit her lips until the blood nearly came.

"And how much do you pay him per week for work like this?"

"Two pounds a week."

"Really two pounds a week?"

"Yes, that is the exact figure."

Alice Heathcote drew her breath hard. Then she got up and rang the bell. The servant came.

"James, show Mr. Bingham to the door; and, remember, he is never to be admitted unless my uncle is at home."

Fred Bingham hesitated, but there was a look of white anger in Alice's face that warned him she was perfectly in earnest, and as she stood looking more even than her natural height in her passion, with her compressed lips, and little clenched hands, Fred thought that for once he had gone too far, and without a word, went out.

When James had left the room, Alice walked up and down for a few times; and then, throwing herself upon the sofa, cried bitterly. Presently she rose, went up to her room, and wrote a note:—

"DEAR MR. PRESCOTT,

"The matter on which I write is between ourselves alone, and I rely upon you to keep it

so. Although matters have occurred which make it impossible that the breach between your friend and us can ever be healed, still it pains me beyond description to hear that he is working down in Yorkshire from morning to night upon pay which can scarcely keep him and his family from starvation. I would do anything to save him from this wretched state ; but he will, I know, accept nothing at my hands. I enclose three ten pound notes. You will understand that I enclose this sum only, because I know that he would not receive more. Will you do me the very great kindness to manage it as a loan from yourself ? It is a harmless fraud, and I can think of no other method. Will you tell him you have had a heavy case on, and are enabled, without hurting yourself, to offer him the money without inconvenience ? Please do this, Mr. Prescott. I ask you, both for your friend's sake, and in the name of the long standing regard which has always existed between yourself and yours sincerely,

“ALICE HEATHCOTE.”

And so Frank received another thirty pounds from Prescott, which he accepted without hesita-

tion, believing that Prescott could spare it, and knowing that under similar circumstances his own purse would have been entirely at his friend's service. For a time, therefore, the Maynards were straight again. The tradesmen's bills which had pressed so heavily were paid off, and a few things which were most urgently required were purchased.

All this while Fred Bingham had apparently been on friendly terms with Frank: at times he was cold and distant with him, carrying his position as master to the very extreme of what he saw Frank would bear; at other times he chatted with him in the most friendly manner—and it is difficult to say under which mood Frank found it most difficult to keep his temper.

Sometimes he would go up on Sunday afternoon and smoke a pipe on the seat in front of the cottage, chatting with Frank, and ignoring altogether his wife's short answers and evident dislike of his presence; for Kate, when she did not like any one, made no secret of her feelings.

"You are very high and mighty, my lady," he said to himself one day, as he drove homewards

in his handsome dog-cart, "but I'll give you something to think of before long."

A few days afterwards he walked into Frank's cottage in the afternoon, to Kate's great astonishment.

"Was just riding by, Mrs. Frank, and thought I would come in to have a chat."

"Thank you," Kate said, "but I'm particularly busy to-day."

"Oh, don't mind me, Mrs. Frank. I'm no stranger, you know."

"I wish you were," Kate muttered, half audibly.

"I wanted to talk to you about Frank. You see this life is a very hard one for him, and it is greatly to be wished that something could be done for him."

"It is not I that make it hard for him," Kate said, pointedly. "I have broken no promises. I didn't tempt him to come down here, and then make him work almost like a common navvy."

"No, quite so, Mrs. Frank," Fred said, composedly. "But that is not now to the point. What I was thinking of, is, could not this unfor-

tunate quarrel between Frank and his uncle be made up?"

Kate looked full at him with her honest eyes. "I expect, Mr. Bingham, you know more of the quarrel than we do."

Fred Bingham coloured a little. "I suppose we both know pretty well all about it, Mrs. Frank. It has been a most unfortunate circumstance, but I should think that Captain Bradshaw by this time would be able to make allowances and to overlook the past."

Kate rose from her seat, her little figure looking grand in its indignation. "I don't know what you mean, Fred Bingham; but if you mean that Frank has done anything which requires to be forgiven, or looked over, you're telling a lie, and I, Frank's wife, tell you so."

"What?" Fred Bingham said, in tones of surprise; "has Frank really kept you in ignorance all this time of the cause of quarrel? I always thought you were the most forgiving of women, but I see now by your manner that you do not know."

"I know all that Frank knows," Kate said; "and that is just nothing."

"Really I am sorry," Fred Bingham began ; "because if you are in ignorance of this sad affair, it makes it so much the more difficult to make it up with Captain Bradshaw ; but I think that if you did but know it you might be able to act as mediator, and I feel sure my uncle could not bear malice any longer. I do so wish to see things made up, that if you will promise solemnly to keep it a secret, painful as it is, I will tell you the real cause of quarrel. You see——"

"Stop, Fred Bingham, stop!" Kate cried impetuously ; "do not dare to say a word to me. Not for fifty times Captain Bradshaw's money would I hear a word against Frank. And more than that, do you think, after what I know of you, that I would believe you if you took an oath on the Bible? Don't speak, sir," she said, passionately. "I warn you, if you say a word, one single word, I will tell my husband ; and if you know him as well as I do, you will know that if he thought you were trying to make mischief between us, he would beat you like a dog before all your men."

"I only wished to put matters straight," Fred

Bingham said, cowed by the might of Kate's anger.

"You did not, Fred Bingham; you never wished to do anything of the sort. I don't believe you ever wanted to do a good action from the day you were born. You simply wanted to make mischief. You only wanted to tell me a lie under promise of secrecy."

"I swear to you," Fred Bingham said, "that what I was going to tell you, Captain Bradshaw will corroborate if you write to him."

"Then, likely enough, Fred Bingham, you lied to him as well as to me; you are quite capable of it. And now go: you may rely that for Frank's sake, though not for yours, I shall not mention that you have been here; but if you ever come again when I am alone, and try to make mischief between Frank and me, I will tell him, whatever the consequences may be."

Fred Bingham went away crestfallen, and never came up to the cottage again.

Two more months passed. It is nearly a year since Frank began work at Landfarn. Things are unchanged. It is a Sunday afternoon, which Frank and Kate always look forward

to during the whole week, as the one day when they are happy together. After church, if it is fine, Frank sits in front of the cottage, and plays with Charley, who is now two years old; Katie sits by his side and reads to him, or talks of old days. They are very happy there, and agree that on Sunday the works shall never be alluded to. Evan does a little in the garden, or helps Jane to carry the baby about. Evan has been on the works ever since they began. He is eighteen now, and his navvy work has widened him out into a broad young fellow. He does not live at the cottage; it is too far from his work; but he comes up on Saturday afternoon, when the pay is over, and stops until Monday morning, working in the garden, and making himself useful in many little ways. On the day in question the afternoon was wet, and Frank had, for want of anything else to do, been turning over his desk, and tearing up the accumulated letters of months. Among other letters which he had so treated was the one which he himself had written to Captain Bradshaw, and which had been returned unopened.

"It's no use keeping that any longer," he had

said to his wife ; " it is not a pleasant thing to stare one in the face every time one opens one's desk."

Kate nodded, and the letter was torn to pieces, and with its envelope thrown carelessly with the others.

Presently Evan came in with Charley on his shoulders, having been engaged in a game of romps with him in the next room.

" Evan, will you take out all the scraps and burn them, and tell Hannah she can lay the cloth."

Evan gathered up the fragments, and left the room. In about five minutes he returned with a serious face, and with an envelope in his hand.

" What is it, Evan ? "

" Please, sir, I was dropping the pieces one by one into the kitchen fire, when I see this envelope."

" Yes, Evan, and what is there peculiar about that envelope ? " Frank asked, amused, for the lad looked so unnaturally serious that he could hardly help smiling.

" Please, sir, there's a seal on it."

" Yes, Evan, it's unbroken. Do you remember,

Katie, my tearing the letter open so as to show you the seal ? ”

“ Yes, Frank, I remember it quite well.”

“ Please, sir, isn’t the seal a hand ? ”

“ Yes, Evan, it’s a hand.”

“ But it’s only three fingers, hasn’t it, sir ? ”

“ Yes, Evan, it has only three fingers ; it’s a crest, but what is there curious in that ? ”

“ Well, sir, it’s curious because I never saw a hand with three fingers on before ; but I’ve heard mother say that Brother James, you know, sir, him as is a cripple, when his mother died she had a seal round her neck with only three fingers.”

“ God bless me, Evan, that is very curious, very,” Frank said, very interested. “ If this should only turn out as I think, by Jove, Katie, it would put that little blackguard’s nose out of joint, and no mistake.”

“ What do you mean, Frank ? I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“ I will tell you, dear. Let me see, Evan, how old is James now ? ”

“ He’s rather better than twenty, sir.”

“ Just so, Katie. Of course it may not be so,

but if it is not it's a curious coincidence. You've heard me say that Captain Bradshaw had a daughter who married and ran away from home, and that uncle never heard of her till he heard she was dead, and had died in great want."

"Yes ; I remember, Frank."

"Well, Katie, as nearly as I can tell that is about twenty-one years ago. Now it is really possible that this poor woman who died at the Holls was her, and that this is her son, whom Captain Bradshaw has never known was alive. A three-fingered hand is not a common crest. I will write to Prescott at once, and ask him to go into the affair. Oh Katie, if it should turn out so, it will be glorious ! Of course my uncle will leave him a part anyhow of his estate. By Jove I can forgive uncle having sent back my letter unanswered, if it is the means of finding his grandson and doing Fred Bingham out of part of the fortune."

CHAPTER VI.

STRANGE TIDINGS.

ARTHUR PRESCOTT was one day surprised at the receipt of the following letter from Frank Maynard:—

“MY DEAR OLD PRESCOTT,

“I am not a good letter writer, and when things are not going on well I don't write at all. Things are not going on well, and I have not written. You and Katie and everyone else have been right and I have been wrong, and Fred Bingham is a damned scoundrel; but that's no news, and I am not writing about that now. I am writing about a very extraordinary discovery which has been made here. This afternoon I was clearing out my desk, and tore up a lot of old letters and things. Evan, who is a first-rate lad and as true as steel, cleared up the letters, and,

seeing a seal unbroken, looked at it. It was the seal of the last letter I had from Captain Bradshaw—his crest, you know, the three-fingered hand. Well, Evan asserts that the mother of the cripple lad had a seal round her neck with a three-fingered hand. If so, it is possible—nay, probable that this lad is Captain Bradshaw's grandson. Whether he knows of it or not I cannot say. In spite of his inexplicable conduct to me I cannot believe it. This is quite in your line, old man, and I leave you to act as you think best. I think my uncle ought to be told in case he should be ignorant of it.

“Yours very affectionately,

“FRANK MAYNARD.”

Prescott read the letter through twice, and then, putting on his hat, went straight down to Mrs. Holl. He was greatly shocked at the striking change which had taken place in the appearance of the cripple lad ; but after the first greeting said,—

“James, I want to talk to your mother ; would you mind going into the next room for a few minutes ? ”

James wheeled his box into his room, and Mrs. Holl closed the door.

"How dreadfully ill he looks, Mrs. Holl."

"Ay, sir, and he is ill; he frets and mopes here, and I fear nothing but change, which the doctor says he ought to have, can save him. Poor lad, I fear me he won't be here long."

"We must hope better things, Mrs. Holl, and the matter I have come about may lead to it."

"Lor! sir," Mrs. Holl said; "how can that be?"

"A curious discovery has been made, Mrs. Holl, which may, I don't say will, lead to our tracing who his mother was."

"You don't say so, sir," Mrs. Holl said.

"I do indeed, Mrs. Holl. I hear from Evan that his mother had a seal, with a three-fingered hand upon it. Have you got it?"

"Yes, sir; I have it locked up."

"Please let me see it."

Mrs. Holl produced from a chest a small bundle of clothes, and carefully done up in paper a small seal. Prescott examined it. There was no question that it was a three-fingered hand.

"Were these her things, Mrs. Holl?"

"Yes, sir ; that's all there were."

"Now, Mrs. Holl, if I am right the linen will be marked L. B. ; or, at any rate, L. something. L. B. were the maiden initials of the lady, and as she died little over a year after her marriage—for she was, I believe, married—it is probable her clothes would bear her maiden initials."

"Yes, sir, sure enough, they are marked L. B. I remember it was L. B. because I looked particular to see if they were marked in full, in hopes of finding out about her. There it is, sir, L. B. clear enough."

"And now, Mrs. Holl, have you any reason to suppose any one has ever had any interest, or watched the boy?"

"Yes, sir, that there has."

And here Mrs. Holl related at length the history of the mysterious visits of Barton, and how they had found out that he had once been a Bow Street runner, but now kept a private detective office. Prescott looked serious.

"This is bad news, Mrs. Holl. It looks as if the boy's friends knew of his whereabouts, but did not choose to own him. However, it may not be so," he said, thoughtfully ; "this man may

have found it out accidentally, and kept it dark with a purpose of making money some day out of the secret. And now, Mrs. Holl, what year was it the poor woman came here ? ”

“ In May, sir, 1831. Her child was about two months old then.”

“ That will do, Mrs. Holl. Please lend me the seal, I will take great care of it. Do not say anything to James ; I may be mistaken, and nothing may come of it after all. I will see you again to-morrow or next day.”

Prescott walked away very slowly, and went the whole length of Sloane Street, up and down, thinking over the best course to pursue. He then turned into Lowndes Square, and knocked at the door which was once so familiar to him.

“ Is Captain Bradshaw in ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

And Prescott was shown into the drawing room. Captain Bradshaw and Miss Heathcote were both there ; and Prescott, who in the thoughts of the important business in hand, had forgotten the possibility of his meeting Alice, stood for a moment irresolute. Captain Bradshaw frowned heavily for a moment, on hearing

the name. Alice Heathcote turned a little pale.

"Mr. Prescott, I am glad to see you," Captain Bradshaw said, coming forward and shaking hands. "Alice, you remember Mr. Prescott?" Alice did, and shook hands too, and really warmly; in the first place, because with a woman's intuition she had known of old that he had loved her, and in the next place because he was Frank's dearest friend. Why she should have liked him for the last reason she could not have explained even to herself. "Mr. Prescott," Captain Bradshaw went on, "I am really glad to see you, and shall be always happy to do so; but only upon the condition, the absolute condition, that you make no allusion to past times, or to other persons. In fact that you come here as Mr. Prescott, to see an old friend, and not in the quality of an ambassador for other people."

"I do not come here in the quality of an ambassador, Captain Bradshaw," Prescott answered quietly, "although you would naturally suppose so from my coming at all. Nor do I come here to renew an acquaintance which I valued, and

should still value, at the highest rate. Greatly as I value it, I could not accept friendship when my best, and truest, and most valued friend is excluded. I do not wish to discuss the point with you, Captain Bradshaw. I know what your feelings on the subject must be, when you can deliberately cast off a man whom I know you loved, but the origin of those feelings is to me an utter mystery. I respect them, however, and you I am sure will respect the friendship, the love I have for a man whom I have for many years looked upon as a brother. The business I have come upon is of an entirely different nature. I give you my honour it relates in no way to what we have spoken of. May I ask you to give me a few minutes' private conversation?"

Alice Heathcote rose. "Thank you, Mr. Prescott," she said warmly, giving him her hand, "for what you have said. I always believed in you, that you were honest and true. Thank you for your defence of your friend. I am glad, yes, I am glad to hear him once again spoken well of. Tell Frank—yes, uncle, I must speak now—tell Frank, that although I cannot struggle against certainties, still that I cannot believe the worst of

him. Tell him that though our paths in life can never come together again, I wish him and his heartily well, and believe and trust that that life will atone, as far as atonement can be made, for his error."

Before Prescott could speak, she had pressed his hand and left the drawing room.

Prescott turned to Captain Bradshaw and was about to demand what Frank's fault had been, that he should be thus spoken of, when the old man rose, and said gravely,—

"No, Mr. Prescott, I will not listen to you. I will not answer any questions. If you are ignorant of the cause of the division between myself and my nephew, a division which nothing can possibly heal, remain in ignorance. Frank has his own trials now, God forbid that I should say aught which might deprive him of a friend like yourself."

"Nothing you could say would do that," Prescott said gravely. "But now, sir, to the business upon which I came. It is, like the other, a painful, an extremely painful business, and you will, I know, believe that nothing but the feeling of its extreme importance could lead me to ask you the

question with which I must begin. You had a daughter named Laura?"

Captain Bradshaw turned deadly pale, a look of extreme pain came across his face, and he gasped hoarsely, "Forbear, sir, forbear, you do not know what you are saying. It is twenty years since I heard her name mentioned. How dare you call her up again?" and he laid a trembling hand upon Prescott's shoulder.

"Forgive me, Captain Bradshaw; I know, at least I can guess, the pain I am causing, but I must do it. Pray sit down, sir, and pray answer my questions. I will ask as few as possible, I will simply relate facts; if I am wrong, stop me."

Captain Bradshaw sank back into his chair, conquered by the steady calmness of his visitor, and buried his face in his hands.

"At the end of the year 1829, or at the beginning of 1830, you discovered that she had made a marriage with a person much beneath her. She left the house, and I believe you never saw her again. You never forgave her."

"I did, sir," the old man said passionately; "I did forgive her. I searched all England

through for her, but I never heard of her until, God help me, I heard she was dead."

"Thank God for that at least," Prescott said. "The man, or one of the men, you employed to trace your daughter was a Bow Street runner named Barton?"

"It was," the old man said, feebly, "though how you should know, I cannot tell."

"Now, Captain Bradshaw, for my last question. This Barton told you, and told you truly, that your daughter was dead; but did he ever tell you she had left a child behind her?"

"A child!" the old man almost screamed, "a child! Laura left a child? Don't say it, don't say it; have I not been punished enough for my cruelty by knowing that my girl, my only girl, Laura, died of want? And now you say she left a child, a child in misery and want, and I, rolling in wealth, have never helped it; oh, my God, my God, it is too much." And the old man sank down in his chair, sobbing like a child.

Prescott did not interrupt him, indeed he was too much affected at the sight of the old man's agony to be able to trust himself to speak. At

last he said, "It is not so bad as you imagine, sir. The child has been brought up in poverty, but not in want. He has been kindly nurtured and cared for by the poor people in whose house his mother died. All that love and kindness could do for him has been done. As they took the mother in and cared for her and nursed her to the last, so they adopted the child as their own. They never knew who he was. It has been discovered now only by accident. This seal, sir, which was the sole article of value she possessed—do you recognise it?"

The old man took it, and his tears fell more gently as he looked at it. "Yes, it was hers," he said; "I gave it her when she went to school. Poor child, poor child!" Then starting up, he went on, "But why do we wait here?—why do we not go to fetch him?"

"My dear sir," Prescott said gently, "I must prepare you for this meeting. The boy when very young had an accident which injured his spine, and he has been a helpless cripple ever since. He is now very ill. The doctors recommend change of air and scene, and I trust that they will restore him to health. He is an extra-

ordinary young man. He is of the highest intelligence, and has educated himself in a wonderful way. Save that he is a cripple, you might well be proud of your grandson."

The old man groaned. "Oh, if I had but known it, if I had but known it! Why did not Barton find out?"

"He did, Captain Bradshaw; he has known it all the time."

"Impossible!" Captain Bradshaw exclaimed. "Impossible!"

"It is true, sir; he has never lost sight of him; he has been in the habit of coming to see him every few months."

"The atrocious villain! the infernal scoundrel!" Captain Bradshaw exclaimed furiously. "Why did he not tell me?—what was his motive?"

"I can only imagine, sir, that he intended to keep it secret until the boy came of age, in order to get him to promise a very large sum of money upon being placed in possession of proofs of his birth."

"The scoundrel! the villain!" ejaculated Captain Bradshaw, almost beside himself with

passion, "I will punish him, I will kill him. Mr. Prescott, you are a lawyer, I will give ten thousand pounds to have him hung."

"We will talk of that presently," Prescott said soothingly; "in the meantime the great point is to get your grandson here."

"Of course, of course," Captain Bradshaw said, the current of his thoughts again changed. "I will tell Alice first," and he went to the door; "Alice! Alice! come down directly."

Miss Heathcote soon entered the room, and was astounded at seeing her uncle walking up and down the room, with the tears flowing down his cheeks.

"Alice," he said, "I am a miserable old man. I drove my daughter from her home in a fit of rage. I tried afterwards to find her, but I never heard of her until it was too late, and the news came to me she was dead—had died of want, Alice, think of that!—and now I hear all, these years afterwards, that she has left a son behind her, and he has grown up a cripple, brought up by the charity of some poor people, whom," said the old man solemnly, "may God bless for their goodness!"

Alice was too surprised to make any comment upon this story, but could only kiss her uncle soothingly. Then she turned to Prescott for further explanation.

“Sit down, Captain Bradshaw,” he said, “for a few minutes and recover your composure. I will tell you all I know about it.”

The two sat down, while Prescott related all he knew of the story, beginning with his first meeting the lad ; telling Mrs. Holl’s story as nearly in her own words as he could recall it, at which point the tears flowed fast again from the eyes of both the old man and Miss Heathcote. He then simply said that the boy Evan, who was with Frank down in Yorkshire, had recognised the crest upon an old letter of Captain Bradshaw’s, as being identical with the one owned by James’s mother. When he had done, Captain Bradshaw said :—

“Thank you very much for what you have done in this case ; and now how shall we get the boy here ? ”

“I think, sir, if you will allow me, I will go down to the livery stables at Knightsbridge and get an invalid carriage, and order it to come round here at once with a couple of men. Then we will

walk round together, and I will go in first and prepare him for it."

"Thank you, Mr. Prescott; thank you very much."

And Alice Heathcote looked a thank-you which far more than repaid Prescott for his exertions.

CHAPTER VII.

OWNED AT LAST.

PRESCOTT went with Captain Bradshaw and Alice Heathcote as far as the street in which the Holls lived, the carriage waiting in Sloane Street until wanted. Then Prescott pointed out the house, and asked the others to wait near for a few minutes until he should summon them. He then lifted the latch and went in.

"I am back sooner than I expected, Mrs. Holl. Do not leave, James," as the boy was preparing to wheel himself away; "I wish you to hear what I have to say. James, it must, no doubt, have often seemed hard to you that you should have no one in the world with whom you are really connected, whose care and love you had a right to claim."

"Sometimes it has, sir," the cripple said quietly, "but I need not have thought so. No

one could have loved me more or have been kinder to me than mother and father here," and he took Mrs. Holl's hand in his.

"Yes, James, you have been indeed fortunate in that respect, but others might have, perhaps, had it in their power to lighten your life more, to have taken you to see the world, and the wonders and beauties of it."

The lad's eyes brightened.

"They might, sir, and I own—it is wrong and sinful perhaps—but the one thing I have always longed for was to see the country, and the wide fields and the green trees I have read of, and above all to see the sea, the great moving infinite sea. Oh, how glorious it must be! But there, sir," he said, resuming his quiet manner, "it wasn't to be, you know, and it is not for me to complain. Why do you ask such questions, sir?"

"I will tell you, James," and here Prescott went slowly and plainly through the narrative of the quarrel of James's mother with his father, of her flight, and of the treachery of Barton in concealing the fact of his existence from Captain Bradshaw.

The cripple listened to it all with greater composure than Mrs. Holl did. Only when Prescott

described the emotion of Captain Bradshaw did he appear affected.

"It is a strange story, sir," he said when Prescott had finished, "and I am very glad to hear my poor mother was forgiven. For myself, sir, it makes but little difference. I am not like other men; still it will be a pleasure to me to be able to have what books I like, and to see for the first time the world. After what you have told me of my grandfather, I shall be glad if only for his sake. Had he been a cold, proud man, who would have been ashamed of his cripple relative, I would have remained here, where all have been so kind to me. My real father and mother are here."

"Don't think of us, James," Mrs. Holl said, crying; "John and me will be only too glad to know you have doctors and comforts, and change of air, such as we could not give you. No, don't you worry yourself about us, James."

"Your grandfather is waiting outside, James, with his niece. May they come in?"

It was a touching scene when Captain Bradshaw entered. He paused at the door, and looked wistfully at the pale figure in his quaint chair. Then he came forward and took the lad's thin hand in his.

"My poor boy, my poor boy!" he said; "my Laura's child. To think you should have been all these years so near to me, and that I should never have dreamt of your existence, James. I have to ask your pardon, it is too late to ask hers now, for the past. I would have atoned it to her, but I could not; let me atone it to you."

"Poor grandfather!" the lad said; "it has been hard on you, too, all these years—harder than on me. You could not find a child again—I found another mother."

"Yes, indeed," the old man said, and turning to Mrs. Holl, who was standing by crying audibly, "You good woman. How can I thank you; what can I say to you in my dead child's name and in my own? But Mrs. Holl, you and your husband will surely have your reward. You know the words, 'I was naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; hungry, and ye took me in.' God will bless you. No thanks I can give you can repay you as your own good conscience must do. I never can repay you, and yet, Mrs. Holl, in some way or other you shall find Harry Bradshaw is not ungrateful."

"Don't talk of it, sir," Mrs. Holl sobbed.

"Me and John only did our duty, and it was a real pleasure, too, for James has always been a happiness and a comfort to us. 'Cept as to his accident, he has never caused us a sore moment."

"And now, Mrs. Holl, you will spare him to me?" the old man said. "You have, I hear, other children; she was my only one. My claim is as nothing to yours, but for his own sake you will let him go?"

"Lor, yes, sir, and glad to know he is with his own people, and well cared for. But you will let us come to see him sometimes?"

Mrs. Holl was soon assured upon this point, and Captain Bradshaw then turned again to his grandson, who, during this time, had been talking to Alice Heathcote or Prescott. The lad was pleased and happy with his new relations. As to Captain Bradshaw's earnestness there could be no doubt, and the lad felt in looking up at Alice, and in listening to her quiet, gentle voice, that it would be indeed pleasant to live with people like these, who would understand his thoughts and feelings, as the kind friends around him could never have done. But he refused to assent to Captain Bradshaw's proposition that the

carriage should come to take him away. "No, grandfather," he said, "I cannot go away and let father come home and find I have gone without a word; I must see him first. Please go home now, sir; I should like to think it all over, and to talk with mother here. In a few days I will come, but not now."

In vain Captain Bradshaw—who greatly admired the thoughtful kindness of the lad's decision—argued against it; in vain Mrs. Holl entreated him, with tears in her eyes, not to mind them, but to go with his new friends. The boy was firm, and Captain Bradshaw could not but respect his decision.

The next morning Captain Bradshaw and Alice again called, and again the next day, but it was not until the third day that James gave way to the entreaties of all around him, and consented to leave those who had for so many years acted as parents to him. By eight o'clock that evening he was comfortably installed in an invalid chair in the drawing-room at Lowndes Square. That was a wonderful evening to him. The spacious room, the handsome furniture, the soft light of the candles—the whole atmosphere of

comfort and luxury, were almost bewildering to him, who had scarcely from his earliest remembrance passed the threshold of the home he had lived in. Very delightful to his ear was the pleasant talk of Captain Bradshaw, and the softened accents of Alice Heathcote ; and when the latter at her uncle's request sat down and sang to him, he could hardly believe that it was all true, and that he was indeed always to live in this atmosphere of refinement and luxury. Not less were his newly found relatives pleased with him. They were surprised at his easy and quiet mode of addressing himself, and at the acquaintance which he showed with books and literature. He was well read in the countries they had travelled in, and took his part in conversation quietly, but with modest confidence. The next evening Prescott came to dinner. James had been carried down in his chair, and to him the rich appointments of the dinner table, and the various strange dishes were a matter of extreme surprise, but with native good breeding he expressed nothing of what he felt, but took his part gaily in the conversation. After dinner Captain Bradshaw said, "Now, James, you can either

stop down here and hear us talk, or you can go up stairs with Alice, and ask her to play to you."

"I will go up stairs, if you will allow me," James said, and Prescott almost envied him as his chair was carried out of the room, followed by Alice.

"He is a fine fellow, Mr. Prescott; I am proud of him. Ah, if he had not been a cripple!" and the old man sighed. "He is very weak, too, but I think he looks better already."

"I think he does, sir," Prescott said. "I feel confident that the change will do him good. And now, Captain Bradshaw, I am going to ask what steps you are going to take to prove that this lad is your grandson."

"Prove it!" Captain Bradshaw said, surprised; "why, there is no doubt about the matter."

"To our minds, no," Prescott said; "the seal, the initials on the clothing, and the agreements of dates and ages are quite sufficient; still, it would be, of course, satisfactory, both to yourself and him, to have the case put in a shape which no one could doubt. There is no doubt, for instance, in our minds, of the marriage of his mother, because you had it from her own lips, but it would be desirable to have the certificate, as

also the register of the boy's birth, and some sort of proof, if obtainable, that the poor lady who died at Mrs. Holl's was his mother and your daughter."

"As you say, it would be better, Mr. Prescott; as far as the estates go, it makes no difference. I have no son, so the entail is broken, and I can leave them as I choose; and it will, therefore, make no actual difference whether James is legally proved to be my heir or not. Still, it would be, as you say, desirable. How is it to be done?"

"Well," Prescott said, hesitatingly, "unquestionably the best plan would be to go to Barton; I have no doubt he has carefully procured all the necessary evidence. He may, perhaps, demand an exorbitant sum, but now that he must see he will get nothing in the way he had intended, we may make terms with him."

"No, no, Mr. Prescott," Captain Bradshaw said, striking the table with his hand; "not one farthing shall that infernal scoundrel get from me—not one single farthing. If it had not been for him—but there, I shall only get in a passion if I talk about him," and Captain Bradshaw gulped down a glass of wine with a force and fury which nearly deprived him of breath.

"Well, sir, in that case we must try other means—advertising, and so on. I will, if you will entrust the matter to me, think the matter over, and set about it quietly."

"Do, Mr. Prescott; I am greatly indebted to you for your kindness already, very greatly, and only wish—there, I see what you are going to say; don't say it, but I have been thinking it over. And now—yes, I knew there was something else I wanted to speak to you about, and to ask you to do for me. About those good people, the Holls. You know I can't offer them money, but anything money could buy, you know, anything, I would do for them."

Prescott thought for a minute.

"I should say, sir, the way to make John Holl a rich man in his own way would be to buy him two or three carts and half a dozen horses, and to purchase some little established connection at the same time as a carrier or dust contractor, or something of that sort."

"The very thing," Captain Bradshaw said. "I give you *carte blanche*. Buy the lease, you know, of the house and furniture and stable, and all that; make all the arrangements, and come

to me when you have done for a cheque for the amount, and, above all, don't be afraid of making it too large. There, I am glad that's off my mind. Now, if you won't take any more wine, we'll go upstairs."

Upon the following evening, at half-past eight, when he knew that the children would be in bed, and that John Holl would be smoking his pipe, Prescott went down to his house. He had made John Holl's acquaintance at the time when he had seen about the arrangements for Bessy's sailing to join her husband in Australia.

"I am main glad to see you, Mr. Prescott; sit down, sir. We had a letter from our Evan this morning; he seems to like navvying work very much, Evan does, and lor, how fond he is of Mr. Maynard, to be sure. But there, that ain't to be wondered at. He be an out-and-outer. There's no mistake about he. Shocking bad job his losing all his money in that there Bank, weren't it, sir?"

"It was, Mr. Holl," Prescott said, lighting his pipe, "a very bad business, indeed. Please sit down, Mrs. Holl, else I shan't be able to talk to John here."

Mrs. Holl took her work and sat down at the table.

"A strange thing your James turning out to be a rich man at last, John?"

"Ay, that were a rum turn out, sir. Sarah's been to see him to-day, and she says he seems as comfortable and as right as ninepence."

"I have known Captain Bradshaw for a long time, John, and I am sure he and James will get on capitally together."

"What tickles my fancy, Mr. Prescott," John said, taking his pipe out of his mouth and laughing to himself, "what tickles my fancy more than all the rest, is to think that chap Barton, after all the years of snuffing and smelling about here, ain't going to get anything out of it. To think he knew all along as how as James were Captain Bradshaw's grandson, and never said a word about it! I wouldn't mind giving a pound—well, no, I don't know as I'd mind giving five pound—for a turn up with him for half an hour. He's a pretty stiff one, but I think," John Holl said meditatively, "I think I'd give him soup in half an hour. I wish I could pay him out, and I ain't quite sure I can't. Perkins—you know

Perkins, sir, of the 'Stunners?' Prescott nodded. "Well, I've heard Perkins say that the Slogger—know the Slogger, Mr. Prescott?" Prescott again nodded—"that the Slogger says as how he knows that against Barton as would make his life not worth a brass farthing if it was known."

"Indeed?" Prescott said, much interested. "I think I will go down and see the Slogger, John. Barton has got some papers, or rather knows where to get them, which are essential to prove legally who James is, and if I could put the screw on to him I might get him to tell me all about it."

"Well, sir, it's Friday to-night, you won't find him at the 'Stunners;' to-morrow's the night for the 'Stunners,' and you are safe to catch him there then, and I expect he'll tell you sharp enough if he thinks it will do Barton a bad turn; he hates him like poison, I know, for Barton got his brother transported four or five years back, and I have heard him swear he would be square with Barton some day yet."

"I will go down, John. I used often to be at the 'Stunners' years ago with Mr. Maynard. And how goes business, John?"

"Pretty much as usual, sir. Dust is pretty

steady. It's looking up though, dust is ; they're making such a sight of bricks round London now, that cinders fetch their price. I can remember when dust warn't worth next to nothing, and the contractor was paid for carting it away. Lor bless you, it's as good as money now. The gaffer as I works for, he's made a snug thing of it. I hear he's going out of it with enough to live on. At one time he could scarce pay his men. It used to be a doubt in my mind all the week whether I would get my money on Saturday night, and now they say he has got his five thousand pounds, and he's going to give it up and go down into the country."

"How many carts has he, Mr. Holl?"

"He's got eight carts and fifteen horses. Some are double carts and some single, you see. Johnson's his name, down beyond Cremorne. I don't suppose it will make much odds to me, he has promised to pass me over to the new gaffer when he sells off. Are you going, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Holl, it is almost time I was off. Good night ; good night, Mrs. Holl. I daresay I shall see you before long again."

CHAPTER VIII.

SCOTCHING A SNAKE.

AT nine o'clock the next morning Prescott went into the "Lively Stunners." Perkins was, as usual, at his post behind the bar, in his shirt-sleeves.

"Well, Perkins, how go things with you?"

"Lor, Mr. Prescott, what a time it is since you've been into the old crib, to be sure. The sight of you is good for one's eyes. Come inside, sir," and he shook hands warmly with Prescott and led the way into his snugery behind the bar. A mere slip of a room, but comfortable, and decorated with the portraits of many worthies of the ring, in fighting costume and defiant attitudes—not perhaps a handsome set of men, but with an undeniable development of biceps. In the post of honour, over the mantel-piece, was the portrait of Perkins himself in fighting costume,

as he appeared on standing up for the first round of that celebrated fight of his with "Unknown." His portrait, as taken in the sixty-first and last round of that tournament, would have been less pleasant to see. Upon the mantel-piece were several silver cups, with inscriptions, stating that they had been presented to Perkins by admirers of his science, endurance, and British pluck.

"Sit down, Mr. Prescott, and light up ; these cigars are a good brand. Now, sir, name your liquor ?"

Prescott named his liquor, Perkins himself mixed it, and then having left the charge of the bar to his assistant, took his seat by Prescott.

"And how go things with you, Perkins ?"

"Bobbish, Mr. Prescott, bobbish. No great shakes, perhaps, but nothing to grumble about. I don't think the young swells are quite what they were. Stroll in, you know, and look on, but don't go in so much for work as they used to do. Don't take their punishment so kindly, you know. Bad job that about Mr. Maynard, sir. Heard about it from John Holl, Holl's boy, being in his service. Now, he was what I call first-rate,

just first-rate. Shoulder a little too low, perhaps, but I defy any man to point out another blemish. Wonderful quick for a heavy weight, and such a hitter. I tell you what, Mr. Prescott, though I shouldn't like it to go further, I never put on the gloves with any man that I felt so unsafe with as with Mr. Maynard. He stood just a little over me. He was as active on his pins as a kitten, and very quick with his head. He didn't mind how hard you hit him, never lost his temper, but was always there, and then, just when you didn't expect it, out would come his left like a sledge-hammer, and his right after it. Ah, he was a out-and-outer. A champion spoilt, sir, I call him, a champion spoilt. I'd have backed him against the Slasher, sir, and put every halfpenny I had on it."

Prescott laughed.

"Yes, he is an awkward customer, Perkins. And now what's going on upstairs?"

"There's a few of the old lot, and half a dozen novices; will you walk up presently, sir?"

"Is the Slogger here?"

"Yes, he's here, sir. Unsteady hand, the

Slogger—can't keep him off his lush. Always breaks down in his training. I've stood twenty on him twice, but it's no good. So he's give up work, and comes here regular to spar. Worst of him is he will get on, late, and make a row. You remember Mr. Maynard paid his fines and took him out twice. He's better than he used to be. I had to tell him that he must give it up, or clear out, for he got my place a bad name."

"I want to have a talk with him, Perkins. A man named Barton,—I believe, from what John Holl says, you have met him at his place,—has got some papers relating to a cousin of Mr. Maynard's. This man Barton is a great scoundrel, and I don't know how to get at him, but I hear that the Slogger thinks he has got some sort of hold over him."

"Yes," Perkins said, "I told Holl about it. I know the Slogger thinks it is a great pull, but he ain't a very long-headed chap, ain't the Slogger. However, Mr. Prescott, you can talk to him. Here, Bill," he called to a boy, "go upstairs and tell the Slogger he's wanted down here."

The boy returned with word that the Slogger

was at present in the ring with Nobbler Jack, but would be down shortly.

In a few minutes the Slogger himself appeared, very hot, very red in the face, and a little puffed about the lips.

"Servant, Mr. Prescott!" he said, "long time since I saw you."

"Yes, Slogger, I've been too busy and am getting too stiff to do much with the gloves now. Sit down and take something to drink."

"Gin cold is my liquor, sir."

"Now, Mr. Prescott," Perkins said, when he had brought in the required refreshment, "I'll leave you to talk it over with the Slogger. I'll just go upstairs and see how things are getting on."

"This business I want to speak to you about, Slogger, concerns Mr. Maynard and myself, and I rely upon you to do anything you can for us."

"That I will, sir," the man said heartily. "Mr. Maynard and you have been good friends to me, and I'm your man now. Who is it, sir? I'll tumble against him somehow, and give him pepper. I don't care if I get six months for

it, not a snap, sir, not for you and Mr. Maynard."

Prescott laughed.

"It is not in that line, Slogger, and if it was you know Mr. Maynard could do it for himself."

"So he could, sir, none better; still he mightn't like to get in the papers, you know. I hoped I might have done him a good turn."

"So you can, Slogger, but not in that line. You know a man named Barton?"

"That I do," the man said angrily. "He got my brother Bill transported. But I'll be even with him some day."

"It is about that I wanted to speak to you. Barton has been paid by Mr. Maynard's uncle to find out something. Instead of that he has cheated him completely, and has kept some documents in his hands which are of great importance. He will now want a large sum of money to give them up. The old gentleman is so indignant that he swears he won't pay him a penny. Now, if you have really got some pull over Barton, and can put on the screw, so as to make him give up the papers, you will do Barton as ill a turn as he has done you, you will greatly

oblige us, and you will put a fifty pound note into your pocket."

"Done it is with you, it's a match," the man said. "I have got what I fancy's a pull over Barton, but I never used it before because I never saw my way. I will tell you, sir, and you can put it on as you think best. You remember I went with Perkins and Mr. Maynard and you to that Chartist meeting. My eye, what a lark that were, to be sure. Well, sir, there was a big slouching chap standing in front of me when the row began. He didn't go in for fighting, but his hat got knocked off in the skirmish, and a black wig he wore, and I saw his short grey hair, and knew him at once for Barton, for it was only a week before I had seen him in the witness-box against my brother. I tried to get at him to give him a remembrancer, but there were half a dozen round all busy at me at once, so I had enough to do to keep close to the others. Well, sir, not long after this, came the blow up of the whole business, and I heard it said among some chaps I knew, who were pretty deep in it, that they had been blown upon. I asked who they suspected, and they told me that it must have

been one of the committee, but there were only one chap who had been on it who they didn't know, and he weren't nowhere to be found. He'd give out he was a joiner, and worked down Clerkenwell, but they searched every shop, and made every enquiry, and no chap like him had been heard of there. I asked about his looks, and, just as I expected, I found out it was Barton. If I'd told 'em what I thought, Barton's life wouldn't have been worth, no, not a day's purchase, for a lot of 'em had sworn if they ever found out who it was they'd do for him; and I didn't somehow like the thought of that. It ain't English, you know, sir, nothing manly and stand-up about it—what I call a foreigneering sort of job. So I kept it dark, thinking some day if any of my pals got into a hole I could put the screw on to Barton, and make him get 'em off. There, sir, that's all I know. What do you think of it?"

"Very good, Slogger, very good indeed. I think I can manage with that. Now will you meet me to-morrow morning at the door of his office at eleven o'clock. I have written the address down upon that bit of paper, so that there

can be no mistake about it. I do not want you to go in with me, but just to be there if wanted."

"All right, Mr. Prescott, I'm on."

And so Prescott took his leave, and soon emerged from the narrow street into the broad glare of the Haymarket.

The next day at eleven Prescott entered Mr. Barton's office, and sent in his name.

"Ask him to walk in."

Prescott took a seat and made a quick survey of the man opposite.

"My name is Prescott, Mr. Barton. I am a barrister. I have come down to speak to you relative to some business you transacted a good many years since for Captain Bradshaw."

The man gave a slight start, and his face grew visibly pale.

"I don't think you acted quite on the square, so to speak, upon that occasion, Mr. Barton."

He paused, but the detective did not speak.

"It was hardly the right thing to do, you know, although perhaps clever; you have the reputation for being a very clever man you know, Mr. Barton," and Prescott paused again, but Barton did not speak, although Prescott could

see that his lips moved, as if he was muttering a deep oath, and drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. "Still, you see, Barton, even very clever men make a mistake sometimes. A waiting game pays sometimes, but, perhaps, more often it does not."

The detective could stand it no longer, but burst out with a fearful imprecation.

"—— what are you driving at?"

"Only at this, Mr. Barton," Prescott went on composedly, "that when you forgot to tell Captain Bradshaw that his grandson was alive,"—the man uttered an exclamation, which was almost a groan, but Prescott, without heeding him, continued,—"alive and well, and allowed him to remain all these years in ignorance of it—with the intention, of course, of extorting a very large sum from the boy when he came of age, for the knowledge of his birth—it would have been wiser to have assured yourself that the mother had left no sign, no little valuables, such as seals with crests, and so on, which might lead to the discovery of the mother without your kind interference. It was not likely, of course, but it turned out so, and the lad is now at

his grandfather's house as his acknowledged and recognised heir."

The detective listened in stupefied silence. This utter overthrow of all he had schemed for for so many years completely crushed him. For a moment he thought of the document he held from Fred Bingham, then he remembered that it was expressly voided by the appearance of the heir. Then he sat for a time with his forehead on his hand, thinking deeply, Prescott quietly watching him all the time. At last he said,

"Well, Barton, what do you make of it?"

"I make this," the man said doggedly; "that the boy may or may not be his grandson, but he has no proof whatever of it. The woman who died at the Holls' may have stolen the things, or they may have been given to her by the other. You have no proof—even if you knew that it was his daughter, which you don't—that the child was hers; and you have no proof that his parents were ever married, even if you could prove the other points."

"We have not," Prescott said, frankly, "and it is precisely for that reason that I come to

you. Of course you have got all these proofs, and I want you to furnish them to us."

"And how much do you propose to give for them?" Barton asked cautiously. "I have waited for twenty years, and I won't give up the game for a trifle."

"Captain Bradshaw is so angry at the manner in which you have deceived him that he will not give one farthing."

"And do you think that, if I have those proofs," Barton sneered, "I am going to give them up for nothing? Do you take me for an idiot?"

"Not at all," Prescott answered unmoved. "I have already said that I take you to be a clever man, although things have hardly turned out as you expected. I will tell you what my advice to Captain Bradshaw will be. I shall recommend him to publish a statement of the case, under the head of 'Extraordinary recovery of a missing Heir,' in every newspaper in England, relating the whole particulars. I don't think your business would be worth much after that."

"I don't care," the man said doggedly; "you won't frighten me that way. I am going to re-

ture. I shall shut my office up next week for good."

"Going to retire to enjoy your honest savings, Mr. Barton?" Prescott said cheerfully; "then we must go to work in another way. We know the marriage took place in or near London, so that an offer of fifty pounds reward will very soon produce that certificate. As to the birth of the child, it is more difficult. Let me see," he said thoughtfully, narrowly watching the face of the man, who was sitting in sulky silence opposite to him; "she was very poor, very. Her husband died, I fancy, before the child was born, so she was likely to have been confined in a workhouse. Yes," he said, seeing a slight change in the man's face, "certainly in a workhouse, and as we know the date to within a month we shall have no difficulty about that part of the business."

"You may do what you please," Barton said, bringing his clenched hand down upon the table with a fierce execration; "you may do what you please, but you can never prove the connection beyond the personal ornaments, and they are no proof at all."

"No legal proof in themselves," Prescott said quietly, "but strong corroborative proof, which coupled with connection of dates and ages, the personal appearance of the lady, and other points, would make a strong case—a very strong case. Well, as you won't help us, we must do our best. So you are thinking of retiring from business, Mr. Barton?"

"Yes, I am," growled the man sulkily; "and now I will trouble you to walk out."

"A snug little place at Putney or Hampstead, eh, Mr. Barton?"

"I don't want any chaff," the man said, rising; "you had better move, and before I make you."

"I am just going, Mr. Barton. I was only about to say that it would not be a pleasant thing for you when you were walking in your garden in the dusk of evening, smoking your pipe—I suppose you do smoke?—to have a bullet put suddenly into you from behind a hedge. I am afraid by what I hear that it is not unlikely. I only mention it as a friend, you know. Good morning."

Mr. Barton turned very pale. He was, as has been said, physically a coward, and this picture

Prescott had drawn cowed him at once. He put his back against the door.

"What do you mean, Mr. Prescott, are you threatening me?"

"I!" Prescott said, in a surprised tone. "I! just the contrary, Mr. Barton. Why, you don't suppose, man, do you, that I would hire a man to murder you because you decline to furnish me with a necessary link in a chain of evidence." And Prescott laughed pleasantly. "I was only acting as a friend, you know, Mr. Barton. One hears things sometimes, and if a word of warning can avert mischief, of course one gives it. Good morning."

Barton irresolutely half moved away from the door, and then his fear got the better of him, and he determined to see whether it was a mere threat or a real danger.

"I have done my duty," he said sturdily, "and I am afraid of no man."

"Very right, Barton, 'do your duty and fear no man' is an excellent rule to act on. Still, you know, men sometimes have a little malice among themselves, even against men who have done their duty. Now, I will give you a case

in point. At the Chartist business three years ago, the men knew that their plans were betrayed and their leaders transported by the information of a man who called himself a joiner, of Clerkenwell. They have sworn to murder him if they find him out, and, upon my word, I believe they will keep their oath. I know that they never have found out who it was, but I have heard that at two o'clock this afternoon they are to be told. Now there is a case in point. Supposing that [informer had been yourself, I ask you, would it be safe for you to indulge in an evening pipe in your garden?"

Mr. Barton actually trembled with terror and rage.

"This is a conspiracy against my life, Mr. Prescott. I will go off at once and swear an information against you."

"Against me, Mr. Barton? you are mad. If I am conspiring at all it is in your favour. I hear a rumour and I mention it to you. I put a hypothetical case for your opinion."

"And you have it in your power to prevent this information being known?"

"Yes, Mr. Barton, this is quite between our-

selves ; but there is a man leaning against the doorway opposite—yes, there he is,” and Prescott looked out of the window. “Now, if I wink at that man as I go out, that man will go straight to his home and will keep his mouth shut for the rest of his life ; and he is the only man besides myself who knows of that little affair. If I don’t wink at him, I really can’t answer which way he will walk.”

“There are the papers,” the detective said, completely cowed, and taking some papers from an iron safe ; “here are copies of certificates of the marriage, and baptism of the child. What else do you want ?”

“I want you to go before a magistrate with me, and swear this affidavit I have prepared, saying, that in pursuance of instructions you received from Captain Bradshaw, you traced his daughter from the place where her child was born ; that you never lost sight of her, and that she died at John Holl’s, and that the child is the one mentioned in the certificate of baptism.”

Without a word Barton followed Prescott downstairs, and as they went out stole a glance at

the lounging figure opposite, who, with his hands in his pockets, was apparently absorbed in the operation of smoking a pipe, but who, after they had passed, moved leisurely after them. When they came out from the Mansion House, Prescott said,—

“ Good morning, Mr. Barton ; that is, I think, satisfactory to all parties.”

The detective walked off without saying a word, he was too completely beaten even to retort.

“ It’s all right, Slogger,” Prescott said to the man. “ He was a dreadful cur. Come tomorrow at eleven o’clock to my rooms in the Temple, and I will hand you over the money.”

“ All right, governor, I’ll be there,” and the man turned off again westward.

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN HOLL, DUST CONTRACTOR.

ARTHUR PRESCOTT went up the same evening to Lowndes Square. The invalid had gone to bed, and Captain Bradshaw and Miss Heathcote were alone.

"Well, Mr. Prescott," Captain Bradshaw said, after the first greetings, "I suppose you have no news to give us yet?"

"I have better than news, Captain Bradshaw ; I have these to give you. There are all the proofs required in any court of law in the world to prove that James is your grandson and legitimate heir."

"Really, Mr. Prescott?"

"Yes, really, Captain Bradshaw."

"My dear sir," the old man said, shaking him warmly by the hand, "I am delighted. I don't know how to thank you. I have been thinking,

since I saw you, that it would be necessary to come to terms with that scoundrel Barton, and I am very glad you took it upon yourself to act without asking me first. How much have you had to promise him? A heavy sum, of course; but I shan't grudge it."

"Not a very heavy amount, sir, considering their value. I shall want a cheque from you for fifty pounds."

"Fifty pounds!" exclaimed Captain Bradshaw. "Do you mean to say Barton gave them up for fifty pounds?"

"No, that he did not," Prescott laughed; "nor would he have given them up for much less than a hundred times that amount. If it is any satisfaction to you, Captain Bradshaw, Barton will not get one penny. I will tell you the whole story. But it is rather a long one, so you had better sit down to listen to it."

So they sat down, Alice Heathcote putting aside the light work upon which she had been engaged. Prescott then told the story of his success, and when he had done Captain Bradshaw was in a state of the greatest delight.

"To think of your getting the better of that

rascal. It is admirable—upon my word [it is admirable; don't you think so, Alice?"

"Yes, uncle, indeed I do. We are all very, very much obliged to Mr. Prescott."

And Prescott felt that he was amply repaid.

"Now, Mr. Prescott, if you will come down into my study for a moment, I will write you the cheque."

Prescott followed him down-stairs. Captain Bradshaw sat down and wrote two cheques.

"Now, Mr. Prescott," he said, when he had finished the second, "you will not be offended at what I am going to say. I am an old fellow, you know, and have known you a great many years. You are a young man, and you have done me a great service—a very great service. I am speaking of your restoring James to me. You have now rendered me another, and have saved me a large sum of money. Will you let me look at all this in a professional point of view? I am a very rich man."

"No, my dear Captain Bradshaw," Prescott said, firmly. "I am not in the least offended at your offering it to me, but I could not take any for doing what has been a great pleasure.

As you say, I have known you since I was quite a boy, and have received very many kindnesses from you; and it is very hard if I may not have the pleasure of doing you a slight service now."

"You are wrong, Prescott," Captain Bradshaw said. "But you must have your way. I am sorry, very sorry, you will not let me prove in my own way that I feel grateful to you. However, there's an end of it," and he tore up one of the cheques. "Believe me, my dear boy, if you ever do want a friend, Harry Bradshaw is your man."

"Thank you, sir," Prescott said, shaking hands with him warmly. "I quite believe you, and am very happy in the belief. I will see about the other business in the morning."

Prescott went upstairs again for a short time. When he had gone, Captain Bradshaw said,—

"That is a fine fellow, Alice, a very fine fellow. I wish I could see my way to doing him a good turn. I have been asking him, delicately you know, my dear, as an old man might ask a young one, to let me treat him as my legal adviser in the matter, but he would not hear of it. It is not

often that a cheque for five hundred pounds gets thrown into the fire."

Alice looked pleased.

"I do wish I could do something for him ; but I don't see my way, Alice—do you ?"

Alice shook her head ; but as she bent over her work a flush mounted up to her forehead, as if the idea of some reward Prescott would care about had occurred to her. Whatever it was, she did not mention it to her uncle.

It was about a week after this that John Holl's master said to him one evening when he went up with the carts at the end of the day's work,—

"By the way, John, the carts won't go out to-morrow. I've sold the whole thing out, as I told you I was going to ; and to-morrow the things change hands, and the new name will be painted on the carts."

"Well, gaffer," John said, "we've worked a good many years together, and I am as sorry as can be that you're going to leave us. Have you spoken a word for me to the new gaffer ? I ain't as young as I was, master ; but no man can complain I don't do a fair day's work."

"I've told him about you, John, and you'll find it all right. I was talking about you and your wife having brought up that boy, and of his having turned out a rich chap. He was quite tickled about it, and so was his wife. She's a kindish sort of woman, John, and she said she should like to see your wife."

"Now, master, you needn't have gone on upon that affair," John said, reproachfully; "there never wer'nt nothing in it, you know."

"Yes, John, but I was only saying that it was a rum start; and, you see, it may do you good, you know. It always does do good when a master and man take a fancy to each other. So you come up to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock, to square up. And tell your wife to brush up a bit, and come along with you."

"Thank you, master, I'll come, and I daresay Sarah will, though the old woman won't like it, I know."

Nor, indeed, did John himself; for there is no man more proud and independent in his own way than an English workman. Indeed, he would have absolutely refused to bring his wife, but he did not like to hurt the feelings of his old

master, who had evidently wished to do him a service.

"By the bye, John," his master said, as he turned to leave the yard, "rumly enough the new gaffer's name is the same as yours, John Holl."

"Is it now?" said John; "well, that is rum! Not that Holl is an uncommon name, or John either, for that matter; but to see it on our carts will be rum. Lor, how my mates will chaff me, to be sure. I know what it will be—Hullo, John, set up on your own account, old man? I say, John, stole a cart? Lor bless me, I shall never hear the end of it," and John went off, laughing to himself.

John had, as he anticipated, some trouble with Sarah; but he had put the case to her somewhat diplomatically, and said that the new gaffer's wife wanted to know the story of James being found and turning out a rich man, and then he had turned her attention off by telling her that the new gaffer's name was John Holl. "Won't it be a rum start, Sarah, to see one's own name on the carts?" Sarah was greatly amused at the idea, and when the appointed time came

made no objection to starting with her husband for Chelsea.

"Lor, John, what a time it is sin' you and me went out walking together on a week day. If you do take a holiday, which ain't often, we have the children with us."

"It do seem strange like, lass. Lor, what a shapely young girl you were when I took my first walk with you. Do you remember it, mother?"

"Ay, John," Sarah said, with a softening of her voice, "I ain't likely to forget that while I live. Well, John, I've been as happy as I hoped to be."

"Ay, mother," John said, "we've had no cause to grumble. If we ain't done quite so well as we hoped then, Sairey, we've done as well as we could have fairly expected. Well, here we are; and I'm blest if there ain't all the carts with their new name on them, 'John Holl, dust contractor.' It don't look bad," he said, critically, as he spelt the letters out slowly. "I wonder what the new gaffer's like."

"Well, John," his old master said, coming out of the house into the yard, "come to square up,

eh? How are you, Mrs. Holl?" and he went into a little outhouse, and paid John Holl his wages up to the preceding night.

"Now, John, I will take you indoors to the new master." At the door, however, John and his wife were surprised to meet Mr. Prescott.

"Ah, Mr. Holl, how are you? How are you, Mrs. Holl? Had a little business here, too, you see. Come in," and he led the way into a neat little parlour, the former master remaining outside.

"Hullo," John exclaimed, in utter astonishment, when, upon entering, he saw the cripple boy sitting by the fireside in the very box in which he had sat so many years by their own hearth, and which, on coming out, they had left in the spot where it had so long stood.

"Yes, father, it's me, sure enough. Well, mother, how goes it? You see I came down here with Mr. Prescott."

Sarah kissed her foster son tenderly, and John Holl shook him by the hand.

"But where," John said, looking round uneasily, "is the new gaffer?"

"He'll be here presently, father, sit you down—sit down, mother."

"Yes, my boy, but the master mightn't like it if he came in here and found us making so free."

"You sit down, mother, the new master won't mind it. He's a good fellow, is the new master, ain't he, Mr. Prescott?"

"He is, indeed," Prescott said, warmly, "a right good fellow."

"So good a fellow, mother, that when he was a young man, and not long married, he took a poor boy out of the streets and brought him up."

"Did he really though?" Sarah said. "Ah, that's why he wants to see us. He has heard about James turning out a gentleman, and he wonders whether his lad will do the same."

"Like enough, mother," John said, "I wish he'd come though; for I can't but feel as I'm intruding here."

"Don't you be uneasy, father. I want to tell you about the new master, for I know you and mother will like him. His name, you know, is John Holl."

"Yes," John said, "John Holl, dust contractor. It's writ up on the carts, James."

"Just so, father, John Holl, dust contractor. Well, father, John Holl, when he was a young man, wasn't a contractor at all, but just a dust-man. When he had not been married long, he took a poor little baby whose mother had died—she was no relation to him, mother, none at all, just a poor creature without friends—and they took in the baby, and brought him up as their own."

"He must be a real good fellow, John Holl, dust contractor," John put in, never remembering that he had done the same thing.

"He is, father. I told you you'd like him. Well, the worst of it was, the poor baby grew up a cripple, just like me, mother. But they didn't love it or care for it any the less, but nursed it and watched over it with even greater tenderness than they had for their own healthy children. Well, mother, years afterwards it was found out who the boy was, and he went away to his new relations. They were rich people, mother, and felt that they owed very much to those who had taken care of the poor boy for so many years. So, mother, without saying anything about it, they bought a business with a house and furniture,

and carts and horses, and all; and John Holl, dust contractor, came to the house, and found the cripple boy sitting where he had sat so many years at their fireside, to say 'Welcome home, dear mother and dear father,' " and he held out his hands to them both.

Sarah understood it now, and in a moment was crying on her knees by the chair, with her arms round his neck. John Holl sat a picture of utter bewilderment. He did not, even now, understand it, and was stupefied at his wife's sudden emotion.

"Do you not understand, Mr. Holl?" Prescott said, coming to his assistance. "Do you not see you are John Holl, dust contractor: the house, and the carts and horses, are yours. James's grandfather has bought them for you."

"For me?" John Holl repeated, still incredulous.

"Yes, for you, father," James said. "Don't you see mother believes it?"

John Holl took the cripple's hand now. His voice trembled.

"It's too much, lad, it's altogether too much.

We couldn't take it, my boy. We only did our duty, James—Sairey and me.”

“You need have no hesitation, John,” Prescott said, putting his hand upon the man's shoulder, “Captain Bradshaw is very rich. This is really nothing to him. He feels under a great obligation to you; and besides, he likes to give pleasure to James. You can't help it now. It's all paid for, and you are John Holl, dust contractor. We watched you go out, and sent the child whom you left at home to fetch the others from school. Your eldest girl is packing up the things, a cart was to be at the door half an hour afterwards, and your things and the children will all be here by five o'clock. James is going to stay with you till seven, and then a cab will call for him. So your wife must set to and make you at home. There is a girl in the kitchen, and a fire, and everything ready. So mother will only have to get tea as usual. Now I will leave you.” And Prescott went out and left them to their happiness.

Several times in the next half hour John Holl went out into the yard, and spelt over the name “John Holl, dust contractor,” and repeated it over

many times to himself. It was not until six o'clock, when the whole family were seated round the table, James at his old place by Sarah's side as half laughing half crying she cut up the bread and butter, that John really realised to himself that it must be true, and that he was really and identically "John Holl, Dust Contractor."

CHAPTER X.

WELL MATCHED.

MR. BARTON closed the office immediately after the departure of Arthur Prescott, and went straight home. Very wrath was his wife when he told her the events of the day.

"You are a miserable cur, Barton, and I always told you so." This was all the comfort he got from Rachel. Presently she continued, "at any rate, you ought to get a round sum out of that young Bingham for that paper he gave you."

Mr. Barton reflected. "Well, yes, Rachel; as you say, something ought to be done there."

"Something done!" Rachel said, contemptuously; "you are a poor thing, Barton. It's lucky for you you've made up your mind to drop the business; you never had much head, though I was fool enough once to think you

had; you're getting to be a downright fool—that's what you are."

Mr. Barton uttered a feeble protest.

"Don't tell me, Robert Barton. I know you, if no one else does, and you may take my word for it. Do you think this young Bingham could let you keep that paper? Why, when he sees this new heir, he will know at once why you went to him to sell the secret, and he will see that he is all right, for the boy's life is not worth, you say, a year's purchase. Well, what would his chance be worth if you were to go to the old man, and prove to him that Bingham knew about the boy being alive, and had paid you to keep it dark? You ought not to give up that paper, Barton, for a penny under a couple of thousand. That will be something out of the fire at any rate."

"You have got a head on your shoulders, Rachel, there's no mistake about that."

"It's very lucky for you, Barton, I have," his wife said, mollified; "it's lucky we've one between the two of us, anyhow."

Fred Bingham came up to town a few days after James had been installed in his new home.

The evening after his arrival he as usual went to call upon his uncle. He was astonished upon entering the drawing-room to see a pale young man, sitting in a sort of invalid chair, with his uncle and Miss Heathcote.

"How are you, Fred?" Captain Bradshaw said, warmly. "Here is a gentleman I wish to introduce you to. My grandson James. There, my boy, congratulate me,"

For a moment Fred Bingham felt as though he would have fallen. Fortunately Captain Bradshaw, in the exuberance of his feelings, patting him on the back, shaking his hand, and demanding his congratulations, gave him time to rally and collect his thoughts before he was called upon to speak. At any rate, his uncle's warmth proved that his first suspicion had been incorrect—Barton had not betrayed the bargain between them. At last he said,

"Really, uncle, I am so surprised I hardly know what to say. Are you in earnest—is this gentleman really your grandson? I had no idea you had one."

"No more had I, Fred, not the slightest in the world. Can't tell you all the story

now—found it out quite by accident. Most extraordinary coincidence. James, this is my nephew Fred, of whom you have often heard me speak.”

“I am sure, uncle, I am truly glad at the discovery,” Fred Bingham said, with great warmth; “this is, indeed, a most providential restoration.”

“Isn’t it, Fred? Just what I say myself—just what Alice says.”

Fred now uttered a few words to James, as he shook hands with him, expressing his great pleasure at meeting with a new relation, who would, he knew, add so much to the happiness of Captain Bradshaw; and then he turned to speak to Alice. Between them now it was declared war, and Fred felt in the sparkle of Alice’s eye, and in the slight sarcastic smile on her lips, that she had read his first horrified surprise, and appraised his subsequent phrases at their true value.

“Is not this indeed a strange and unexpected pleasure?” she said; “I knew you would join so heartily in our delight.”

Confident and secure as Alice was of her own

position, and fearless as she was by nature, she could scarcely repress a little shiver at the glance of deadly hate which Fred Bingham gave her from under his fair eyelashes. Then, as his uncle was speaking to the cripple, he answered in a low tone,

“It is indeed, Miss Heathcote; it is a pity that the one member of the family is absent whose presence would make your happiness complete.”

Feeling contented in the thought that he was nearly quits in this little sparring match, Fred turned and sat down by James, and entered into an animated conversation with him. Cool-headed as he was, however, he could not sustain this long. He wanted to be away in quiet to think over this unexpected misfortune. He soon pleaded an engagement, and rose to leave. Captain Bradshaw, however, insisted on his going down to the library with him, in order that he might give him a short narrative of the matters relating to his newly found grandson. Fred kept up his attention to the narrative, uttering short ejaculations of wonder or pleasure in their proper places. When Cap-

tain Bradshaw had finished his narrative he said,—

“Of course this affair, my dear Fred, will to some extent make a difference in your prospects. I say, frankly, that it was my intention previously to have left all my property to you. Alice is amply provided for, and I had no one else whom I should have cared to enrich; but you need not be afraid, my dear boy, you will have a very handsome slice yet.”

Frank murmured a few words of deprecatory thanks, and then took his leave. Very fast he walked down Lowndes Square, swinging his cane violently, and at times cutting at the air with it. As he turned into the roar of Knightsbridge his speed slackened, and he began, as was his wont, to speak to himself through his closed lips.

“So that is the heir. I can understand now why Barton came to me. He did not think he would live till he came to be of age. He may not. No one can say. He may live for years—these sort of people always do. If he outlives the old man, as is likely enough, I shall at most get a third. I suppose he will leave the boy

the estates and me his money, and, perhaps, some of the farms. Of course I must make myself pleasant to this imp, in case he should outlive the old one. But I don't think he will," he added, more cheerfully; "Barton evidently did not give him a year—and he mayn't even last that. Still this will shake my credit with the Jews. I shall have difficulty in getting them to wait. Of course my agreement is at an end with Barton. I agreed to pay him at my uncle's death, in the event of no nearer heir appearing. Yes, he will be sold anyhow. If the boy dies it will, after all, be a lucky thing he has turned up. Besides, even after paying Barton, he might have been an annoyance in some sort of way. Yes, it may be for the best after all. How Barton must have sworn when he heard it. I wish I had been there to watch his face. The laugh would have been upon my side, I fancy. No wonder he wouldn't tell me who the heir was—an old fox. By Jove!" and here he stopped in his walk in consternation, "he has got that paper of mine. He was safe enough to keep it dark before, for it was worth twelve thousand pounds to him; now it's worth nothing, and if

he chooses to show it to the old man I am ruined. By Gad! I am completely under his thumb;" and for once, in his despair at this new danger, Fred Bingham lost his jaunty, elastic walk, and crawled along Piccadilly with the step of an old man. Presently he hailed a cab, and when he reached home astonished the servant by taking a candle and going straight up to his bedroom, without a single unpleasant remark. The next morning he went down to Mr. Barton's office. That worthy had by one of his emissaries learnt that Fred Bingham had returned to town the day before, and had gone up in the evening to Captain Bradshaw's. Fred Bingham was paler than usual, but he was cool and collected, and thoroughly prepared for the encounter. He began the conversation.

"Of course you have heard that the boy has turned up?"

"Yes, Mr. Bingham; I have heard that, and it is a bad job for both of us—worse for me though than for you. It will do you no harm in the long run; he won't live the year out."

"It was sharp practice of yours, Barton,

coming to me when you found he was not likely to live to come of age. A deucedly clever stroke though. But I don't think he's as bad as you think. My uncle told me he has picked up a great deal in the few days since he came there."

"I tell you he won't see out the year, sir. I heard him cough every three minutes the last time I was with him; if he ain't in a consumption I never heard anyone. Naturally enough the excitement has brightened him up for a while; but, take my word, he is not good for a year."

Fred Bingham felt his hopes revive. "Well, you may be right," he said. "By the way," he added, indifferently, "as he has turned up, you may as well return me that agreement of mine; of course it is useless now."

"Well, Mr. Bingham, I have been thinking that little matter over, and I think, on the whole, I should prefer to keep it," the detective said, with a cold smile.

"I do not see that it can be of any use to you now, Barton. It expressly states the money is only to be paid in the event of no

nearer heir making his appearance, and now this boy has turned up it is of course worthless."

"Well, as a legal document it is not of much value, I allow. But it's as a sort of keepsake I should wish to preserve it, for a while at least. It's all I've got, you see, after twenty years waiting."

"Come, Barton, it's no use our beating about the bush—what will you take to give it up?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Bingham, it is not worth much to me, but it's worth all Captain Bradshaw's estates to you. I only have to put that paper into your uncle's hand, and explain the little circumstance connected with it, for you to lose every penny."

"You are putting the case strongly, Barton, very strongly," Fred Bingham said, with a coolness that surprised and alarmed the detective; "yes, if Captain Bradshaw saw that document and believed it—and believed it—it would, as you say, cost me the whole of the property, which, if the lad dies, as I believe he will, no doubt will come to me. But you would not gain

a single penny by it, Barton, and, as you owe me no grudge, there would be no satisfaction in ruining me. Besides, Captain Bradshaw would not believe you. If I have not that deed in my possession when I leave this office—I have a cab with a fast horse at the door—I shall go straight to my uncle and tell him that a scoundrel named Barton, with whom I have had a little business once or twice in making inquiries as to character, has been threatening to ruin me with him by means of a forged paper, pretending that I knew of the boy's existence. Captain Bradshaw already knows you are a scoundrel; he knows you have deceived him all these years, and believes you capable of any crime. When, therefore, you appear before him, and show him a document signed with a signature perfectly unlike mine—perfectly unlike, Mr. Barton—you will probably find yourself kicked into the street by the footman. So, you see, the game is not so completely in your hands as you thought."

Mr. Barton sat completely staggered by his visitor's coolness. Fred Bingham followed up his advantage.

“Come, Barton, you are a clever fellow, but you have lost the game. The signature does not in the slightest degree resemble my own. I did it, not with any intention of disputing the claim if you acted fair, but as a precaution in case you did not. Now I don’t want to act hardly on you, and I don’t want, I say honestly, even a suspicion to arise in my uncle’s mind. I tell you what I will do in exchange for that deed. I will give you a bond, stating that in consideration of valuable services you have rendered me in the exercise of your business as a detective, I undertake to pay you three thousand pounds upon the death of Captain Bradshaw, should he carry out his declared intention of making me either wholly or partially his heir. These are my terms, what do you say?”

“And you will sign that before a witness?”

“Certainly,” Fred Bingham said.

Mr. Barton rose, and gave his clerk directions to go out and get a stamp of the necessary value. The agreement was then drawn up and signed, the exchange was effected, and Fred Bingham tore up the former deed into the smallest

possible pieces. Then, greatly satisfied with the result of this his second encounter with Mr. Barton, he went out into the City to transact the business which had brought him up to London.

CHAPTER XI.

AVENGED.

ANOTHER fortnight went on, and the beneficial effect which the excitement of the change had effected in the health of the cripple boy began to disappear, and a short irritating cough constantly harassed him. Captain Bradshaw called in the best medical advice, and their verdict proved the death knell of his hopes. His grandson's lungs were seriously affected. He might of course live for a long time. Yes, change might be beneficial. Torquay? Yes, Torquay would be just the place. And so to Torquay it was decided that they should proceed in a few days.

One morning Alice Heathcote was talking alone with the invalid, when the name of Fred Bingham was mentioned.

"Do you like him, Alice?"

"No, James," Miss Heathcote said; "to tell

you the truth I do not like him at all. But my uncle is very fond of him, and so I keep my dislike to myself."

"I am glad you don't like him," James said. "I took a dislike to him, I don't know why; he was very kind and friendly, but I did not like him. I was afraid perhaps I was prejudiced, but if you don't like him, I am sure I was right."

"I am not infallible, you know, James," Miss Heathcote said, half smiling; "but in this case I am pretty sure that my dislike is well founded."

James thought for a time.

"I have heard the name of Bingham before, and I was trying to remember when. It has just struck me, a Mr. Maynard, whom Evan Holl is at work with, is under a Mr. Bingham, a contractor down in Yorkshire."

"It is the same Mr. Bingham," Alice said, quietly.

"Why, how can that be, Alice? Mr. Bingham is a cousin of Mr. Maynard, and in that case grandfather would be Maynard's uncle too."

"Yes, he is, James; but there has been a quarrel between them."

"Has there?" James said; "I am sorry for that. I knew Mr. Maynard, he came twice to mother's, and he was so frank and cheery, and so kind-hearted too. Why, it was he who sent out, at his own expense, Bessy Holl—she was mother's sister, you know—to Australia to join her husband. I never saw such a fine fellow, so generous and kind. Evan would lay down his life for him. And he is very poor now, very, Evan said so in his letter. He lost all his money when the Great Indian Bank broke. What could grandfather have quarrelled with him about? Why, Alice, you are crying. I have not offended you, have I? I beg your pardon."

"No, no, James, I am foolish, that's all. And now, James, I will tell you a secret. Once I loved Frank Maynard, loved him with all my heart. I thought he loved me, but it was all a mistake. You understand, James, he was not the least to blame. Well, when I found out my mistake I tried hard to cure myself, and had come, when he married, to look upon him quite like a brother. Well, James, we found out—at least uncle found out, and told me—that he

was not what we had thought him, and that he had done a very wicked thing. I can't tell you what it was, James. Well, uncle wrote to him, and he never answered, never tried even to excuse himself. It was so bad a thing, James, we could never esteem him or know him again. It almost broke uncle's heart, and it made me suffer very much too, James, just as if it had really been a brother who had done it. When we heard he had lost all his money, we sent some to a bank for him without saying who it came from; but I suppose he guessed and so would not accept it—anyhow he sent it back. I know he is very poor, and that it must be dreadful to be under Fred Bingham. Everyone speaks well of Frank. Mr. Prescott likes him so much, you tell me how kind he was, and I know, yes I know, how frank and straightforward and true he was, James, and I do so wish it could be made up and forgiven. He has been punished, and his conscience must have punished him more than uncle's anger could do, but we ought not to cast him out all his life for one sin. I was as angry and sorry as uncle was at first, James, but I do so grieve over it, I do so

fret when I think of him, and how he wants a friend now. I cannot ask uncle to forgive him. I have been as hard as he has, but would you, James? He will not refuse you anything; you could put it on the ground of what he did for your aunt when she was in distress. Poor Frank, I do feel for him so."

And Alice, who had tried hard to speak steadily, again broke down.

"Certainly I will ask it, Alice. I do not think my grandfather will refuse me," and James sat for some time with a look of sad thought on his face. "I will speak to him to-night, after dinner."

After dinner, accordingly, James refused to go upstairs as usual with Alice, and had his chair wheeled close to his grandfather. For some time they talked upon ordinary subjects, and then there was a pause. James sat toying with a dessert-knife in his thin hands, and coughed once or twice with the short hacking cough that went to his listener's heart.

"May I tell you a story, grandfather?"

"Certainly, James," Captain Bradshaw said.

"Some time ago, uncle, nearly three years

now, I was at work at my flower-making, you know, when a very tall, good-looking gentleman came in about some business with mother. He was very kind, and talked for some time in a bright, cheery way. He bought some of my flowers, and sent me down a great box of books to study."

"God bless him!" Captain Bradshaw said, interjectionally.

"Some time after, uncle, we were in great trouble. John Holl's brother William was sentenced to be transported as a head Chartist, and his poor wife, Aunt Bessy, as I used to call her, was in terrible grief. The same gentleman happened to hear of it, and came down and paid her expenses to join her husband in Australia, which she did a few months afterwards. This gentleman is now very poor, he has lost all his money, and has quarrelled with a rich relative. His name is Frank Maynard. Grandfather, it is of no use deceiving ourselves. I know I am dying, I know I cannot live many months; let my one request to you be that for my sake you forgive him, and let him be to you what I would have been."

"I will, I will, James," Captain Bradshaw said, wiping his eyes. "I have been thinking ever since you came here of forgiving him. I have had a lesson heavy enough for any one man of the sin of unforgiveness. I will forgive him, James. I will see him and tell him so, but he cannot yet come back here to us. Perhaps some day, but not now. But at least I will make him independent and comfortable. I loved him, James, very dearly, and would have trusted him with my life, and when confidence like that finds it is mistaken, it is very hard to heal. I know that all men would not look at his fault as I did, but he did it deliberately. He told me the first time he had seen her how pretty she was, and I warned him not to go again, as mischief might follow. He took my advice in good part, and I thought no more of it until her old father stood before me and called for vengeance. He had that day been to see his daughter's body, which was—— Good God, James, what is the matter?—what is the matter, boy? Speak to me."

James was sitting as if stricken with a fit. His thin face was as pale as death, his eyes,

unnaturally large, were fixed and staring; his hand was clenched. At last he said,—

“Grandfather, was her name Carry Walker?”

“Yes, James, that was her name. Did you know her?”

“Know her?” the cripple lad repeated, with a ghastly laugh; “know her? Look at me. Three years ago I was a cripple, as I am now, but I was strong, and well, and active. I could swing by my arms like a monkey. I was a cripple, but I was happy and light-hearted. A girl used to come in to talk to me. She was an angel, as good and as beautiful as one. I worshipped her, I could have kissed the ground she trod on. She was not for me, a poor cripple, I never dreamt it, but I worshipped her as I might have done an angel of light. And she knew it, but never looked down upon me—never jeered at a cripple’s adoration, but was like a sister with me. A scoundrel killed her. You know how. I never blamed her, she was not to blame. I know she was as pure and as sinless as an angel, but she was as trusting, and he deceived her. With her went my life. I did not care to live, I longed to die, all my spirits and my strength

went. I only longed for one thing ; I longed to know who had done it—I longed to kill him. I once suspected. I had mentioned his name, and she had changed colour and seemed confused, but I believed him so good and so true, that I blamed myself for the doubt, and now I know at last that those doubts were only the truth. Carry, Carry ! I have avenged you at last. Grandfather, the man who killed her has killed me. For myself I could still say forgive him ; for her sake I say cast him out for ever.”

“I do, James,” the old man said, solemnly. “Henceforth he is dead to me. Did I see him dying of want at my feet I would not stretch out a hand to save him.”

“Thank you, grandfather,” the cripple said, with his face set in a savage joy, and then it softened again as he murmured to himself, “At last, at last, Carry, I—I, the poor cripple—have avenged you.” Then he said to his grandfather, “Please go upstairs, uncle, and send Alice down to me. She asked me to speak to you. I must tell her. Please ask her to come down to me.”

In a minute Alice came down. At the sight of

the lad's face, of almost ghastly pallor, she said,—

“Oh, James, I fear you have been exciting yourself too much. And I see he has refused you. How could he?”

“No, Alice, he has granted what I asked him. Listen to me, Alice. I have told him a story. I will tell it you. I loved, not as men love, but as one might worship an angel, a girl who came to talk to me and cheer my life. She was all that was good and bright and pure. I need not tell you the rest—I see you can guess it. I have prayed and longed with a despairing longing that I might some day punish this man. I knew not who he was. The impotent rage, the intense longing, this sorrow and pity have for months been killing me. At last I have avenged her. Frank Maynard may die of want before grandfather would stretch out a hand to save him.”

A look of deep pain, of horror, and of pity, succeeded each other on Alice Heathcote's face, until the closing sentence, and then she threw herself on her knees by his side and took his hand.

“Oh, James! I am so sorry, I pity you so much, but do not say that. Forgive, as you would be forgiven. It is his one fault. It is a terrible sin, James—a dreadful, dreadful sin; but think what he must have suffered, think what remorse he must have felt. She would say to you, ‘Forgive,’ James. Oh! have mercy upon him, for his poor wife’s sake, for mine!”

“No, Alice, I can only think of Carry, and I will never, never forgive him!”

The cripple spoke in a tone of bitter pleasure which there was no hope of changing; his face looked into the distance with a strange smile of gratified vengeance, and Alice Heathcote, without a word, rose proudly from her knees, and, with a face as pale as his, left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

SHAKING OFF THE YOKE.

It was dusk one evening when Frank was plodding his weary way home ; as he passed through Landfarn he met the doctor.

“ Ah, Maynard, how are you ? ”

“ Well enough, Morgan, but amazingly tired. ”

“ Come in and have a cup of tea. ”

“ I can't, doctor, my wife is expecting me, and will be anxious till I get home. Walk part of the way with me. ”

The kindly little doctor walked along with him.

“ You can't go on like this, Maynard ; you will never do any good with this little brute of a cousin of yours. Your wife, too, is getting thinner and paler. The wear and anxiety are too much for her. ”

“ Do you think I don't see it, Morgan ? ” Frank exclaimed, passionately ; “ I do nothing but think

of it. I don't care for the work, hard as it is; but it's the thought of her sitting there alone all the day. I've been thinking to-day, I must make an end of it. I can't stand it any longer. I shall kill that fellow. I was nearly breaking out to-day. The only thing is, he's afraid of me now. He knows he's gone too far. He comes down and blows up; but he daren't say a word to me. He's no fool, and he knows that if he gave me a chance—just a chance, I would thrash him to within an inch of his life before the men; ay, and I would, too. It's as much as I can do to keep my fingers still when I see him coming."

"I wish he'd break his neck," said the doctor; "but I'd rather he did it himself than that you should do it for him. I tell you who I pity more than I do you, Maynard."

"Who's that, doctor?"

"His wife. Poor thing, she won't last long; and it will be a merciful release for her."

"Ay, indeed," Frank said; "I have heard of entertaining an angel unawares, but if ever a woman married a devil unawares, she did."

"Well, Maynard, I must turn back. My patients will be wanting me. Keep your heart

up, man, and get out of this as soon as you can."

"I will," Frank said to himself, as he strode on in the darkness. "No one can say I have not stuck to it like a man. It's nearly two years since I came down. By Jove, it seems to me I have been here an age. I'll tell Katie to-night that I give it up. Australia will be a joke to this. Thank God, here I am home."

A bright light streamed out through the door, and a bright face came to open it as her ears caught the sound of his tread on the gravel.

"Well, dear, how are you?—very tired, poor old boy. There, sit down, Frank; I'll unlace your boots. Hannah, bring some hot water for your master. Tea is all ready, Frank, and I've got some sausages for you. Here's your coat, dear, and your slippers. Now you look comfortable."

"And what did you have for dinner, Katie?"

"I?" Kate asked. "Oh, Charley and I had cold meat. He's such a good little fellow, Frank," she added, hastily, but Frank paid no attention to the latter remark.

"Cold meat!" he half groaned to himself;

"there was not a scrap left ; I had to pick the bones last night."

"There was plenty, Frank," Kate said, anxiously, "and we had rice pudding, too. By-the-bye, Frank," she said, suddenly, "there is a parcel come for you. I've been wondering all day what it could be. No, I won't open it till you've begun your tea. There, now I'll open it. Two covers, three covers ; how carefully it is done up, Frank. There—why, it is a jewel-case. Oh, Frank, what a splendid chain—what a superb chain !"

It was a magnificent chain, of full length for a lady, made of rough gold, alternated with large pearls, and as thick as a man's little finger. Frank and Kate both gazed at it in astonishment.

"Good gracious," Frank said, "who in the world has sent you that, Katie ? What a present for a woman whose husband can't earn a dinner for her !" he added bitterly.

"Frank, you shan't talk like that," Kate said, forgetting all about the chain, and going round to Frank. "Oh, Frank, you will break my heart if you do. Let us only hope for the best, dear, and all will come right."

"I've made up my mind to-day, Katie, that I won't stay here any longer."

"Thank God," Kate said fervently. "Anything—anything will be better than this. Oh, Frank," and she cried on his neck, "I am so glad, dear. I would not propose it, but oh, I have so wished you would. What are you thinking of doing?"

"We will talk it over, Katie, after tea. You are forgetting your chain. Who can have sent it?"

Kate took it out of its case, and held it up.

"Oh, Frank, what a magnificent chain to be sure; and what a curious one, with such rough gold and such splendid pearls. Can it be real, Frank?"

"I don't know, Kate; is there no letter? look in the top of the case."

"Oh, yes, Frank, here is a little note, addressed to me—Mrs. Frank Maynard.

"BALLAARAT.

"MRS. MAYNARD,—

"It is now three years since your husband helped a broken-hearted woman in the

time of her greatest distress. When she was friendless and hopeless—when it seemed to her that her husband was to be parted from her for ever—when to both it seemed that God had forsaken them, your husband, on whom they had no claim, even of the slightest, came to them. He gave them hope and life; he restored them to each other and to the world. Buoyed up by hope, the husband gained the approbation of those above him, and the term of his punishment was remitted. He came to the gold fields; there he worked at his trade. He first built wooden huts, then took contracts, and bought land. A town sprang up. That land is worth a hundred times what he gave for it. He is now a rich man. He can never repay, we can never repay him whose kindness has made us what we are. My husband wishes me to say that he has heard from his brother that Mr. Maynard is down in Yorkshire, at work upon a railway. If you would not think it presuming on our part, we would say, why not come out here? Work of that kind is abundant, and well paid for. My husband can procure contracts, and would be only too glad and too proud to find the necessary

capital, and to work in concert with and under Mr. Maynard's directions. Accept a small remembrance of the grateful regard which is borne by her, who, with her husband, prays God daily to bless our benefactor and those he loves.

“BESSY HOLL.”

Frank fairly sobbed aloud. Kate, when she could speak, laid her hand upon his, and said reverently, “Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days it shall return again unto thy bosom.”

Frank took her in his arms. “Dear wife, at last there is a future for us—at last there is an end to our anxiety and care. Let us thank God for it. This man means what he says, and from him, at least, I am not too proud to receive assistance. He has already made a position there, and with a staunch and able friend like that, we may rely upon making our way.”

“Does it not seem strangely providential, Frank, that just as you helped him and his wife, when everything seemed at its worst, so he now holds out hope for us when we were ready nearly to despair.”

"It is so, Katie. I accept it as God's providence, and we will act upon it. Now, dear, give me some fresh tea; mine is quite cold, and even joy does not do away with hunger."

"What a heavy chain, Frank, and the pearls are really magnificent."

"They have sent the chain with an object, Katie. They had heard from the Holls of our circumstances down here, no doubt. They were too delicate to send money, so they have sent this chain. They have almost pointed out that it is not meant to wear. It would be equally out of place here as at Ballaarat; besides the roughness of the work is out of all proportion to its value. No, Katie, these noble people have sent the chain to pay our passage out there, just as I paid hers. What a strange coincidence, and how delicately they have done it. The intrinsic value of that chain, Katie, with such pearls as those, must be at least three or four hundred pounds."

"When will you do something, Frank?" Kate said, when, tea over, Frank had taken his seat in his easy chair by the fire, and had lighted his pipe. "You don't mean to go to work to-morrow, do you?"

“Yes, Katie; I will turn out as usual. It will be a real pleasure, for I shall know it is for the last time. I shall go there, and stick at it until he comes round as usual in the middle of the day, and then I shall tell him I’m going. I know it will rile him tremendously, for in the first place I am very useful to him; in the second, he will lose the gratification he has in seeing me under him; and, in the third place, he is bound under heavy penalties to have the first bit of the line ready in three weeks, and it’s as much as he can possibly do to get it finished. I should not be surprised if half the men leave when they hear I’m going. They hate him nearly as much as I do; and if they leave, the line can’t be open in time, and the directors are sure to enforce the penalty, for I know he has quarrelled with them.”

“Oh, Frank,” Kate said, earnestly, “how I hate that man! It is very wicked, I know; but I hate him with all my heart. I should like to see you say good-bye to him, and, oh, Frank, I would give all I have in the world, and that’s not saying much, to see you take the little wretch by the collar, and thrash him—I should, Frank. Yes, you may shake your head, I know it is wrong,

but think how he has treated you all these months."

"I do think, Katie, and, what is much more, I think how you have suffered all these months; and yet I will go away without thrashing him. It is not from want of good will, Katie, but I am just afraid—no, not of him, dear, but I am afraid of the law; for there's nothing would give him such pleasure as to get me put in gaol for six months. I believe he would not grudge the thrashing; and in the next place, Katie, I am afraid of myself. If I once lost my temper with him—if I once touched him"—and there was such an intense menace in Frank's tone that Katie was frightened—"if I once touched Fred Bingham, I should kill him."

"No, no, Frank," Katie said, anxiously; "I was only joking. I do hate him, but I would not have you touch him for anything. No, no, dear. Promise me you will keep your temper with him."

"Yes, Katie; I won't touch him. I shall probably express my sentiments somewhat forcibly; but, if I know him, when he sees that I am no longer under his thumb, he will know better than to say a word which would give me an excuse for

doing it. And now, Katie, it's half-past nine, and I must go off to bed. Thank God, to-morrow is the last morning. I shall go up to London with the chain the day after to-morrow, pet. I dare not trust it by post."

Very quickly the next morning's work passed over Frank. He walked up and down the length of the work, watching the men at work at the various smaller cuttings. He gave a direction here, and asked a question there; but all the time the thought was dancing in his brain, "For the last time, for the last time." Then he went back to the great cutting. It was a busy sight, with the swarms of men, each working like a part of a great machine, without confusion and without noise, each man knowing what he had to do, and doing it with all his might. The speed with which the long lines of waggons were filled by men below, and men on the bank beside them, and by men wheeling the stuff from points beyond. Sometimes the silence would be broken by the sound of mallets striking upon great wedges, and by a cry of "Look out, lads! she's moving," and then down with a crash would come a portion of the face of the high clay wall, pre-

viously holed at its foot, as deeply as the men could swing their picks; and then dozens of men would swarm upon the fallen mass and tear it to pieces with picks and spear-headed crowbars, called devils. Sometimes, too, from where the clay was toughest would come a warning cry, and then the dull report of a heavy shot, used instead of the wedges for tearing it asunder.

"It's jolly work," Frank said to himself. "With any other master, I should have liked it very much; and, above all, if I were the master myself. Well, I may be some day; who knows?"

It was just twelve o'clock when Fred Bingham was seen coming along the line, on foot, as usual, but with his pretty pony led after him by one of the boys. He looked at everything sharply as he came along, and addressed a few unpleasant remarks to the men at the tip. Then he came on to the entry of the cutting.

"Have the men knocked off?" he asked the ganger.

"Yes, sir; about two minutes since."

"Hum," Fred Bingham said, producing his watch. "It wants two minutes to twelve yet by my time."

"We went to work, sir, by Mr. Maynard's watch, and we knocked off exactly at twelve."

"Whether it had been exactly twelve or not, I should have knocked the men off when I did," said Frank, whom his cousin had not noticed except by a slight nod when he arrived. "I always stop when I have filled a set of waggons, whether it's five minutes to twelve, or five minutes past."

"How many sets have you filled to-day?" Fred asked.

"Eleven."

"And how many are you working a day?"

"Seventeen."

"Then the men will have done by four o'clock?"

"Somewhere about that," Frank said.

"If they can get seventeen sets filled by four o'clock," Fred Bingham said, "they ought to do twenty."

"I differ from you," Frank said, coolly; "men who are working piece work expect to get away by four. I am certain if they were working day work they would not get fifteen sets full by six. They do a very good day's work."

"That's your opinion, Maynard. I am master here, and I insist upon twenty sets being filled in future."

"You may insist till you're black in the face," Frank said, "but you won't get it done. I know what a fair day's work is, and I consider twenty sets to be more than a fair day's work, and I won't ask the men to do it."

"You won't, eh?" Fred Bingham said, turning sharp upon him. "You will do as I order you, Maynard, or you leave these works."

"Very well," Frank said, calmly; "then I do leave them. I have worked here, Fred, as I don't believe any other man in the world would have worked for the same pay. You know that I have got your work done more cheaply for you than you could have got it done any other way."

"I suppose the pay suited you, or you would not have stayed," Fred Bingham answered. "Do you mean what you say? Because if you do, you can go to the office and get your money."

"I quite mean it," Frank said, calmly. "From this moment I am no longer in your employ. And now, Fred Bingham, as you are no longer my master, I can speak out. You have treated

me, as I believe never was man treated before. Your father persuaded me to come down here. You took advantage of the delay in the works to grind me down to a salary you would not have offered to the commonest man. Worse, you have taken advantage of my position, knowing my circumstances, and that I was under your thumb, to say things to me, and to treat me as you no more dare have done under other circumstances, than you dare have flown. I know why: you hated me, because I was popular here and you are not; because people were ready to be friends with your paid inspector, who would not be friends with you; because I was liked and you were hated. You hated me for this. I have put up with it in silence; I have borne your petty insults, and you dared not, no, dared not, go beyond a certain point; but now, thank God, I am free. You thought you were to be a petty god here, and you hated me because I would not bow down at your feet. You petty tyrant, you miserable, insignificant little despot, I have done with you for ever, and you may thank your fates that I go without giving you the thrashing you so richly merit."

Fred Bingham had grown very white as Frank spoke, but he only said, "Keep your heroics, Frank. The sooner you go the better I shall be pleased. Don't you lay a hand on me, Maynard, or you will regret it," he said, as Frank made a step towards him.

"You miserable, paltry little cur," Frank said, contemptuously, "I should despise myself if I were to touch you. Lads, come here!" he shouted in a loud voice; and the men, many of whom had looked curiously on during the evidently warm colloquy between the man they looked upon as their master and the contractor, drew round. "Look here, my lads," Frank said, "you see this miserable, little undersized cur. He is my cousin; you would hardly think it, but it's a fact. He has cheated and deceived, and insulted me, time after time, lads. Thank God, I am able at last to leave him; and I want you all to hear me tell him, that he is a loathsome little blackguard. I don't thrash him now as my fingers itch to do, because he would have the law upon me, and I have other things to see to; but I warn him solemnly, if ever I get the chance, I will thrash him to within the last inch

of his life. And now, lads, good-bye. We have got on, I hope, well together ; I have liked you, and I hope you have liked me. I am sorry to leave you all, but I can't stand this any longer. I wish you all well, lads, and I never expect to get a better lot of men under me. Good-bye, lads, I leave at once."

Amidst a chorus of "Good-bye, your honour," and many a hearty shake of a rough hand, Frank moved out of the crowd of men who surrounded him, and strode homewards.

Fred Bingham had stood without saying a word while this scene was going on, and without one of the men paying the slightest attention to him. The men, after a few words to each other, separated to finish their dinners. Fred Bingham stood by the side of the cutting and looked down. Presently he saw one or two of the men put on their jackets, and the following colloquy ensued, evidently intended for his ears:—

"What are you up to, Bill?"

"I've jacked up," the man said; "I'm off to the office, Bob, to get what's owing to me. After working for a real gentleman, I ain't going to work for such a —— as that thing on the top there."

"Ay, ay, Bill, I expect most of us are of one mind there; wait a minute, and I am with you."

"Ay, ay," said a chorus of men round; and in little groups they put on their coats, and went off towards the town, until not a single being was left, and the great cutting, which half an hour before had been so full of life, stood idle and deserted, with the picks, and shovels, and tools strewn idly about, and the teams munching their oats without a driver.

For a long time Fred Bingham stood immovable; then, with a deep curse, he turned away.

"I'll be even with you yet, Maynard; this is one for you, but I've had the best of it yet."

The news rapidly spread over the works that Mr. Maynard had left; and the next morning, out of the thousand men previously at work, not twenty answered to their names.

Fred Bingham was riding moodily homewards, when he came up to a young navvy, who was walking in the same direction. Fred Bingham wanted to go up to one of the cuttings which was close to the road, and so he dismounted, and called to the lad, in his usual sharp, im-

perious way, "Here, you boy, hold my horse for me."

The lad looked round—"Hold it yourself," he said.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Holl? don't give me any of your insolence, or I'll lay my whip over your back."

"It's more than you dare do," the lad said.

Fred Bingham was personally not a coward, and in his present state of sullen fury he did not hesitate a moment, but struck the boy across the cheek with all his force with the riding-whip.

Evan had not been a navvy for two years and a half without having his share of fighting. He was not tall, but he was broad and powerful, and he sprang forward, and before Fred Bingham could get his hands up, he struck him a tremendous right-handed blow in the face, which knocked him off his feet, as if struck with a thunderbolt. Then, smarting with the pain of the blow on his cheek, he caught up the riding-whip, and lashed Fred Bingham mercilessly over the head and body, exclaiming, "The first was for me, but that's for master; that's for master, curse you!" Then throwing down the broken

whip, he said, "There, you won't forget that in a hurry; now you may go."

Fred Bingham rose to his feet, half blinded with rage and pain.

"Twenty pounds if you'll bring him into the town," he shrieked, to two navvies who had come up just as the affair began.

"Not if you made it a hundred," one of the men said, grinning. "You hit him first, and it serves you d——d well right."

Fred jumped on to his horse with a curse, and galloped furiously towards the town.

"You have just about served him out, young one. My eye! how you did lay it on. You've spoilt his beauty for some time; there's two of his front teeth gone; and his lips, my crikey! He won't go grinning about for some time. Now, if you take my advice, you'll make yourself scarce. Have you got any money in your pocket?"

"Only fourpence," Evan said.

The two men consulted together.

"Here's three bob; that's all we've got between us. All right—you take it; we've got a few shillings to get at the office."

Evan took the money. "Will you see Mr.

Maynard, and tell him I'm going to start at once for Sheffield. It's thirty miles off, and I'll be there by morning. He's going up to town, and I'll meet him at the station and come on with him."

"All right, lad, we'll tell him. You'd better keep in the fields for the first few miles."

Frank had been home about an hour, when the servant told him that one of his men wished to speak to him. Frank went to the door. "Ah, Baker," he said, "what is it?"

"Well, Gaffer, I've come up to speak to you about Evan; but I don't want any one to hear me"—and he looked round mysteriously.

"Nonsense, man, there's no one to hear you here; but come in."

The man followed into the sitting-room.

"This is Baker, Katie, one of my best plate-layers."

Kate smiled at the man, who bowed confusedly.

"Now, what is it, Baker?"

"Well, sir, young Holl's got himself into a scrape, surely."

"Has he?" Frank said, much vexed. "What

the deuce has he been up to now? he's never got into a scrape before since I had him."

"Well, sir, it's a bad job this, too," the man said, with a twinkle in his eye; for he had heard the colloquy at the cutting, and guessed that Frank would be the reverse of angry.

"Well, out with it, man; what's he been doing?" Frank said, impatiently—"fighting?"

"Fighting ain't no name for it, gaffer—knocking a gentleman down, knocking two of his front teeth out, and then giving it him with his own whip, till there ain't a whole place on his face where I could lay the top of my little finger."

"Good gracious!" Frank exclaimed; "why he must have gone mad. He couldn't have been drinking. There was not time for that; besides, I never knew him drink. What the deuce could have possessed him? What had the gentleman done?"

"Well, it was all the gent's own fault, gaffer; I must say that for Holl. The gentleman asked Holl to hold his horse, and the lad wouldn't do it, and gave him cheek. So the gentleman, he up with his whip and hit Holl across the face, and Holl went at him like mad,

and gave him one on the mouth which, as I said, master, knocked two of his teeth out, and cut his face right open ; and then he took the whip, and he cut him about with it, till his face is—my eye ! I can't tell you what his face isn't like."

" Well, it served him right ; that is, a thrashing would have served him right ; but not such a tremendous licking as this. And what's become of Evan ? "

" He started across the fields for Sheffield, master. He said he would be at the station to meet you in the morning ; and it's well he is, for the police are out all over the place for him."

" It's very tiresome," said Frank ; " but who is this unfortunate man who has got this tremendous licking ? "

" Well, master," and again the man's eyes twinkled ; " his name is Mr. Frederick Bingham."

" What ! " shouted Frank ; " do you mean to say it's Fred Bingham ? "

" That's him, gaffer, sure enough."

" Hurrah ! " Frank shouted ; " do you hear that, Katie ? Thrashed like a sack, and two of those front teeth he was so fond of showing down his throat ! "

"I'm glad," Kate said, heartily; "I'm glad. I'd have given anything to have seen it."

"So would I, Katie. Why didn't you tell me at once it was Fred Bingham?" he asked the man.

"I always like to keep my good news for the last, master," the man said, with a grin.

Frank and Kate both laughed.

"Here, my lad," Frank said; "here's five shillings to drink my health. Be sure you don't let out where Holl is gone."

"Trust me, Gaffer," the man said; "I'm as close as a mole. Good-bye, your honour. I wish you luck wherever you go."

Frank gave the man a warm shake of the hand. "Good-bye, lad; keep yourself steady."

"Well, Katie," he said, when he went back to the parlour; "I am pleased. To think of that rascal getting his deserts after all."

"So am I, Frank. It's very unwomanly, I have no doubt, but I'm delighted."

About an hour later there was a noise on the gravel in front, and Frank went to the door. There was an inspector and three policemen; while behind them, on his horse, with his face

bound up in a complete mat of bandages, sat Fred Bingham.

"What do you want, inspector?" Frank, who knew the man, said.

"We have come up, Mr. Maynard, in search of a lad who has committed an aggravated assault upon Mr. Bingham, and who is supposed to be here."

"I have heard another version of the story," Frank said. "The boy was struck first, and he only gave the fellow who hit him what he richly deserved. But he is not here, inspector; I have not seen him since I left work."

"Do your duty, inspector, and search the house!" Fred Bingham exclaimed, speaking thickly, and with difficulty.

"Hold your tongue, you Bingham," Frank said; "and get off my property this instant. I warn you—you are trespassing. You can search the house, if you like, inspector; but I give you my word of honour that Holl is not here, that he has not been here, and that I am perfectly unaware where he is at the present time. If he were here I should advise him at once to give this ruffian who struck him in

charge for the assault. There are witnesses who saw it."

"I believe you paid him to assault me, Maynard," Fred Bingham said, furiously.

"No you don't, Bingham," Frank said, calmly. "These sort of things I am in the habit of taking into my own hands; and I warn you, you are in my debt still, and that if ever I have a chance I will clear it off. No; this time you brought it upon yourself for daring to insult some one who was not bound hand and foot to you."

"I don't know about the rights of the case, sir," the inspector said; "however, of course I will take your word about his being here, Mr. Maynard. Come, boys, we must search somewhere else."

And the whole party went off down the drive.

Another week, and Frank Maynard, Kate, and the children were in London. Jane, the nurse, had also accompanied them to London, she having expressed her willingness to accompany her master and mistress to the end of the world. But Kate confided her private opinion to Frank that the fact of Evan deciding also to go with

them to Australia exercised a not inconsiderable influence in her decision. Mr. and Mrs. Holl would have wished Evan to stay at home to assist his father in the business; but Evan, although much struck with the dignity and comfort of the position of John Holl, Dust Contractor, refused to leave Frank; and neither John nor Sarah would say a word to shake his fidelity. He took up his abode, however, with his father and mother up to the time for sailing. Prescott had taken lodgings for the party at Kensington, met them at the station, and went home with them. Frank and Kate were both in high spirits, for Kate had written to Mrs. Drake, saying that she had not wished to weary her by telling her how badly things had gone with them since the time of the stoppage of the "Great Indian Bank," but that Frank had been for two years down in Yorkshire, learning railway work, and that they had now made up their minds to emigrate to Australia, where they had a friend who would be enabled to push them. She concluded by asking Mrs. Drake if she would advance them two or three hundred pounds. The reply came by return of post, gently upbraiding

Kate for not having written before to say how they were situated, and enclosing a cheque from Mr. Drake for five hundred pounds. The next day Teddy himself came up. He was as full of fun and life as ever. Sarah, he said, would have come too ; but she could not leave her baby, who was only a month old, but she, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Drake, sent every kind message.

Frank had at once consulted the papers, and had found that the "Tasmania," a first-class packet, would sail in ten days for Melbourne. A passage was at once taken for the whole party, and for the next week Frank and Kate, accompanied by Teddy, had an immense deal of work to get through.

Kate was quite another woman now. She had never shown before her husband how anxious she was, but the strain had told upon her severely. Now, however, it was over, and with the hope of a bright future before her, she almost regained her former cheerful brightness during the ten days of their stay in London. Formerly she had dreaded the thought of emigrating. It had all seemed so vague and dim, and the chance of ever returning had been so slight ; but now there was

every hope of success, and as Kate was taking all she loved with her, she would not have fretted had she known they were never to return.

At last the day of sailing arrived. Prescott and Teddy Drake went on board at the docks, and remained with them until the pilot went ashore at the Downs. Very hearty were the adieux and good wishes; but Kate kissed her cousin, and her husband's faithful friend, with scarce a tear in her eye; and, with Charley held up in her arms, and her husband standing with his arm round her, watched the boat until its occupants were no longer distinguishable.

"Now, Frank," she said, as she turned away from the bulwark after the last wave of her handkerchief; "we are fairly off at last, and I've got you all to myself for the next five months. I suppose I ought to be very miserable at leaving England, but it has treated me so badly lately that I am not so sorry as I ought to be. You keep hold of me, Charley; the vessel is beginning to roll a little, and you will be down if you don't mind. Here, Frank, you take him up; I will go and see after Jane and baby. I do not expect she is such a good sailor as I am,

and I must look after baby for the next day or two. I feel very happy; don't you, husband?"

"Very, darling; and I have every reason to do so. The past has been a sort of bad dream, Katie; we mustn't think any more of it. Now, dear, you go down, and I will light my pipe, and look after Charley."

CHAPTER XIII.

NOT GUILTY!

CAPTAIN BRADSHAW had now been down at Torquay for nearly two months. The haughty coldness with which Alice Heathcote had for some time treated the invalid boy, after his refusal of the prayer she had made him on her knees, had now worn off. He was evidently sinking fast, and Alice's offended pride faded into pity at the sight of his worn looks and failing strength. The invalid had for some time talked but little, and tears often came up into his eyes as he sat silent and abstracted. One day, especially, after he had received a letter from London, he sat more silent even than usual, and looked several times wistfully across at Alice, who had palpably been crying, for a short note from Prescott had told her the same news which James had heard in a letter from Evan.

At last he spoke. "Alice," he said, softly, "I do not think I shall live very long: would you mind kissing me?"

Alice's tears flowed again now, as she bent over the pale face and kissed him.

He took her hand and looked up. "Forgive me, Alice, I have been very hard and wicked. I have thought it over, what you said that evening. Ever since, I have been sorry, and yet I could not give way. I had so longed, I had so prayed that I might have vengeance, that I was blinded and mad. I know now I was wrong. What am I, a poor dying cripple, that I should carry my vengeance to the grave? I feel now that you were right, Alice: she would have forgiven, and I forgive now for her. I could not do it before—I could not do it while he was in England. I could not have borne to have seen him; but now that I know he has sailed, I can do it. It is a grudging forgiveness, you will say. It is, Alice. I have had a very hard fight with myself, and I think I could have gone down to the grave without doing it, if it had not been for your words. If it is any satisfaction to you, Alice, it is you who have won it. He can come back again if he likes, when he

arrives out there. I shall be gone long before he can even get the letter."

Alice bent over him and kissed him again. "Thank you, James; you have made me very happy."

When Captain Bradshaw came in, Alice, with a glance at the invalid, rose to leave the room; but he said, "No, please stay, Alice. Grandfather, you love me, do you not?"

"Yes, indeed, my boy, I do," the old man said, earnestly.

"Grandfather, you would like to know I died happy?"

Captain Bradshaw nodded affirmatively, he could not trust himself to speak.

"I shall not die happy unless you grant my prayer, Alice's prayer and mine. Frank Maynard sailed to-day for Australia. Write and tell him to come back again. I let him go, because I could not have borne to have seen him; but tell him to come back,—tell him that you and Alice forgive him; tell him that I, who loved Carry so much,—that I feel that I can speak in her name, forgive him too—fully and wholly. Will you do this, grandfather? Do it for my sake."

"Yes, my boy," the old man said, his voice trembling; "I forgive him for your sake."

"Write kindly, grandfather; he has suffered enough. Send him plenty of money to come home at once, and tell him my place here is vacant for him. Take him again to your heart. I cannot but think with Alice that, except in this one great sin, he is good and honest. And now, please, I should like to be quiet a little while."

The next morning James went out as usual in his chair, Alice Heathcote walking alongside. They went down to the beach, and there stopped awhile, James looking out over the sea. "How quiet and how beautiful it is, Alice! I am very, very glad that I have been able to see it. I think I should have known about the country from books, but no book could give me an idea of the sea. Shall we go back now?"

The chair was turned homewards, until, passing a small circulating library, Alice said, "I want some note paper, James; do you mind stopping a minute while I get it?"

"No, Alice, and ask them to send me out some books to look at. I always like to see the books before I choose them."

Alice Heathcote went into the shop. An old man was behind the counter. "I want some note-paper, and please will you take a few of the last novels to the gentleman in the invalid carriage at the door, that he may choose a set."

As Alice spoke a young woman came forward, selected several books, and went with them to the door.

Alice heard a strange hoarse cry from James, "Carry!" and then there was a dull sound, as the young woman fell heavily on the floor.

Alice ran first out to James, who was deadly pale, and gazing with a strange fixed stare into the shop. "What is it, James, tell me, what is the matter?"

He did not answer till she touched him. "Carry!" he said, "Carry! alive. Oh, thank God! thank God!"

The footman, by Alice's direction, assisted the old man in raising the insensible woman, and carrying her into the parlour.

Alice waited until she recovered, and then returned into the shop, and beckoned the old man to follow her. "You are Mr. Walker, I presume?"

"Yes," the old man said, "I am, madam; and let me implore you, do not mention to any one what has happened. If you only knew what Carry has gone through, I am sure you would not; and now, just as we were getting comfortable again"——

"You may rely upon me, Mr. Walker. But I must see your daughter, and ask her some questions. The happiness of a whole family depends upon her answer. I will come in at nine o'clock this evening."

"Very well, ma'am," the old man said, "but pray, pray say nothing about it."

"You may rely upon me," Miss Heathcote said.

James was very quiet and still upon his way home. "Only to think," he muttered gently to himself, "Carry alive after all!" When he reached the door, he said to Alice, "Please tell grandfather. I shall go and lie down for a while."

"Uncle Harry," Alice said, "a very strange thing has happened. We went into a shop, and found Mr. Walker and his daughter."

"What!" Captain Bradshaw said, perfectly

astounded. "Mr. Walker and his daughter? Do you really mean her, Alice?"

"Yes, uncle, there is no mistake about it."

"But I thought she was drowned, Alice?"

"We did think so, uncle; but you see she is not. I shall be able to tell you more to-night, uncle. I am going to see her at nine this evening."

"Going to see her, Alice!"

"Yes, uncle; we have been acting too much in the dark all along. Part of the accusation against Frank is untrue anyhow. Thank God for it! And I am determined now to find out from her how much Frank really was to blame. I am afraid we have been very cruel, uncle."

"Nonsense, Alice," her uncle said, testily. "The old man's daughter was missing, and he came to me after seeing what he certainly thought was her body. Fortunately, it was not. That misery is off our minds anyhow. I am quite ready to forgive Frank—in fact, I have forgiven him, and I really do not see any use in making any more inquiries into the matter."

"I am very glad and very thankful too, uncle; but my point of view in the matter naturally differs somewhat from yours. Besides, uncle,

I really want to see this unfortunate young woman."

Captain Bradshaw looked intensely surprised.

"Yes, uncle, I want to see her for James's sake. Poor boy! I fear, uncle, he cannot last very much longer, and I am sure it would make him very happy if he could have her to nurse him, and be with him to the end."

"But, my dear Alice, do you remember——?"

"My dear uncle," Alice said, gently, "I only remember how terribly she must have suffered. We are going to forgive Frank, and to take him back again; is it for us to throw this poor girl's fault in her face?"

"My dear," her uncle said, kissing her, "I beg your pardon. You are a dear good girl, and I am an old fool."

At nine o'clock, Alice Heathcote, attended by a footman, went down to the library. The shop was closed, but the door was opened by Mr. Walker.

"She is in the parlour, ma'am, and please," he said, nervously, "please don't speak harshly to her, she has suffered so much."

Telling the servant to wait outside, Alice went in. Mr. Walker remained in the shop, in which the gas was still burning, while Alice went through into the parlour beyond. Carry was sitting at the table, but rose as she entered. Carry had changed very much from the merry-faced girl, who, three years before, used to stand behind the counter in New Street. She was not yet twenty-one, but she had a look of quiet womanly sorrow on her face, which made her look years older. The golden tresses were hidden now beneath a plain widow's cap. Her dress was entirely black, which set off the extreme paleness of her complexion. In manner she was quiet and almost dignified, and was still very pretty, but of an entirely different expression from the prettiness of old. She bowed gravely to Alice, and apparently waited for her to speak. "My name," Alice began, "is Miss Heathcote. I am ward to Captain Bradshaw of Lowndes Square." Carry paled a little at the name. "The gentleman you saw at the door in the invalid chair, whom you knew at Mr. Holl's, has turned out to be Captain Bradshaw's grandson. He is dying, I fear he cannot live more than a month or two

longer, and one of my objects in coming to-night was to ask you to come and nurse him."

Carry gave a start of surprise,—“Me!”

“Yes,” Alice said, gently, “he has always loved you, and it would be a great satisfaction to him to have you near him. You will be received as a friend by all. Will you come?”

Carry hesitated, and then the blood rushed into her face. “But do you know——?”

“Yes,” Alice said, “we know your sad history, and how you must have suffered. Still we say, will you come? Your father can surely spare you for a little, and you can if you like come back here every night. If you have any other ties—” and she hesitated.

“No, Miss Heathcote,” Carry said in a low voice; “my child died a year since. I will come to you; and, oh, thank you for speaking so kindly as you have done,” and her eyes filled with tears.

“And now,” Alice said, “I must ask, and I beg of you to answer me, painful as it is to both of us, a few questions about that wretched time. All we know is, that your father called upon my uncle, and accused his nephew of having deceived and

deserted you, and said that he had seen your body."

"He thought so, Miss Heathcote, but it was not. God spared me that sin. I went out blind and despairing when I read that he was married. I went out to drown myself; but when I got to the river, I thought of my father's agony, and I felt he would forgive me; and though I would rather, oh, how much rather, have died, I resolved for his sake to live. But it was too much for me, and I was taken ill; I think I went out of my mind for a while, and came to myself in a hospital. Then I wrote to my father, and he came to me. We went down to Weymouth first, and took a shop there. Baby was born there. People thought I was a widow, and were very kind; but when baby died, I did not like it, and came here six months ago."

"And now I must ask you a more painful question. You do not know the sorrow and misery this has caused me. He was to me as a brother, to my uncle as a son. We have never seen him since. He has been ruined, and has gone out to Australia to work for his living. Now that we know you are living, we can forgive

him, but I esteemed him and thought so highly of him, that I would so like to know if there is not some little palliation. You will tell me, Carry?" and she took her hand in her earnestness. "For God's sake tell me the truth, even if it is against yourself. I do so want, when I see him again, to find that though he has sinned, I may yet esteem him somewhat as I used to do. Was it in a moment of madness, or did he solemnly promise to marry you?"

Alice awaited the reply with an intense anxiety upon her face. Carry was very pale, and was a moment before she answered.

"Miss Heathcote, I wish I could tell you that it was as you hope. I have forgiven him, and wish him no ill. But it was not so. He over and over again promised to marry me. He swore it on the Bible. He said if his uncle did not die in a month or two, as he expected, he would marry me privately. I can show you his letter," she added; "I have it still."

"It is not necessary," Miss Heathcote said, sadly. "I feel you are telling me only the truth. Oh, Carry," and she burst into tears, "if you knew how I have hoped against hope—

how I buoyed myself up all these years with the faith that when your father said that he had deliberately deceived you under promise to marry you, he said so only in his grief and anger. But it is all over now. Only from your own lips could I have believed that Frank Maynard would have——."

"I beg your pardon," Carry said, turning very white again, and trembling all over. "Who did you say?"

Seeing her agitation, Alice said hastily, "I beg your pardon for paining you by mentioning his name."

"Who did you say?" again Carry asked.

"Frank Maynard," Alice said, surprised at this strange conduct.

"Frank Maynard!" Carry said. "Is it Frank Maynard who has been accused all this time?"

"Yes, yes," Alice said, the possibility of a mistake flashing across her, and leaping up, she seized Carry by the shoulders. "Oh, Carry, Carry, for God's sake tell me it was not he—tell me, and I will fall on my knees and bless you. Tell me it was not he."

"Frank Maynard!" again Carry repeated. "I

never saw him but once. No; it was Captain Bradshaw's nephew, Mr. Bingham."

Alice gave a cry that was almost a scream of joy, and then fell on her knees.

"Great God, I thank thee!" she sobbed out. "Merciful God, I thank thee that thou hast taken this great burden off me—that thou hast cleared my brother from this accusation."

Then, with her face on Carry's knee, she cried more quietly for some time, Carry crying too, although she hardly even yet comprehended what had happened.

"And is it possible," she asked at last, when Alice had a little recovered her composure, "that Mr. Maynard has been accused of this? How could such a terrible mistake have occurred?"

"Your own father accused him of it to Captain Bradshaw."

"Impossible!" Carry said.

Then she rose, opened the door, and called to her father, who was walking nervously up and down the shop during this long interview, to come in.

"Father," she said, "a dreadful mistake has somehow occurred. Miss Heathcote says that

you went to Captain Bradshaw and accused Mr. Maynard—the Mr. Maynard who saved your life, you know, father—of being the cause of my death.”

“God bless my soul!” Mr. Walker exclaimed, in a state of extreme nervous astonishment, “the lady must be mistaken. I never thought of such a thing—it never entered my mind. Why should it?”

Carry looked at Miss Heathcote in perplexity.

“My father is a very nervous man, Miss Heathcote; but I don’t see how he could have made such a mistake as that. As he says, why should he?”

Alice, too, was puzzled.

“Can you remember what you did say, Mr. Walker?”

“I can’t exactly remember what I said,” Mr. Walker answered. “I always had a wretched memory. But I am pretty sure—yes, I am quite sure—I told him his nephew had caused the death of Carry; for I thought she was dead then.”

“That is how the mistake occurred,” Alice said, seeing at last the truth. “You said nephew;

and he, knowing from Frank's own lips, that he had called at your house and had seen your daughter, thought it was he. Probably he the more thought so, because Frank told him how very pretty your daughter was, and Captain Bradshaw warned him not to call again, because he might be losing his heart."

"He never did call but once, Miss Heathcote," Carry said, glad even now to know why Frank Maynard had never come again to see her. "But we never knew that Mr. Maynard was Captain Bradshaw's nephew. Indeed, how should we? We always thought that—that he was the only nephew."

"I see it all now, Mr. Walker. You thought Captain Bradshaw had only one nephew, and accused him. Captain Bradshaw knew one of his nephews had been to your house and admired your daughter, and naturally thought at once of him. Poor Frank, poor Frank!"

"But why did not Mr. Maynard defend himself, Miss Heathcote?"

"He never had an opportunity," Alice said. "My uncle wrote to him a very violent letter, not, I believe, mentioning the exact offence, but

turning him off for ever; and as they had not been,"—and Alice coloured a little,—“on very good terms for some little time before, I suppose Frank was too high spirited to reply. Though I wonder he did not write, too. Still, I can't blame him for that. But oh!” she burst out, as the thought struck her,—“oh, the wickedness, the vileness of the other! He knew the fault for which Frank was turned off, and which made him my uncle's sole heir, and yet all this time he has encouraged the mistake, and taken Frank's place, while Frank has been working for his bread.”

“And has he really done that?” Carry asked. “Has he really let Mr. Maynard be accused all this time?”

“He has; and more, he has twitted me, who he knew cared for Frank as a brother, with his conduct.”

“Papa,” Carry said solemnly, turning to her father, “let me thank God that I did not marry this man. A thousand times better as it is, with the shame, and the disgrace, and the sorrow, than the life I should have led with such a wretch as this. To think,” she said bitterly, “that I could have loved him and believed

in him. Thank God—thank God for my escape.”

“And now, Mr. Walker,” Alice Heathcote said, “it is very late, but I must ask you to come round with me to my uncle. I cannot rest until I have shown him what a terrible wrong we have committed towards poor Frank. You will come tomorrow morning to see James?” she asked Carry, taking her hand. “It will be an act of real kindness.”

“Yes,” Carry said, “I will come without fail. Here, papa, is your hat and coat, and mind how you come back.”

CHAPTER XIV.

WAITING FOR THE SHIP.

"WHERE is Captain Bradshaw?" was Alice Heathcote's first question, as, escorted by Mr. Walker and the footman, she entered the house.

"In the dining-room, Miss Heathcote."

Alice entered, followed by Mr. Walker.

"Oh, uncle," she said, passionately, "we have been so cruel and so wrong. It has been such a terrible mistake after all, and poor Frank is quite, quite innocent. Oh, uncle, I'm so happy, so, so glad." And she threw her arms round Captain Bradshaw's neck.

Her uncle was too much surprised to speak at first. "Innocent, my dear!"

"Yes, uncle, quite, quite innocent. Here is Mr. Walker to tell you."

"Sit down, Mr. Walker," Captain Bradshaw said, rather stiffly, for he believed that the

present was some scheme on the part of the old man to prove that Carry had not gone wrong at all. "Let me hear what you have to say. I can hardly understand, I confess, how my nephew can be innocent in this matter; although I have heard to-day, and with pleasure, that your daughter was still alive."

"Well, sir," Mr. Walker began, in his usual nervous hesitating way, "it seems it was a mistake altogether. I thought of your nephew—I knew him to be your nephew—and I did not know the other was your nephew at all. So you see you thought I meant the wrong one—that was how it was."

Captain Bradshaw looked at Alice in bewilderment.

"Damme, Alice, if I can make head or tail of what he says, or what he means."

"He means this, uncle. He knew you had a nephew, but he only knew you had one nephew. He came to accuse that nephew as the destroyer of his child. That man whom he accused was not the nephew you were thinking of. It was Fred Bingham who had done this thing, and not Frank Maynard. Frank never went there again after

that evening when he spoke to you. They never knew he was in any way related to you. It was Fred Bingham he spoke of. He was the man Mr. Walker knew to be your nephew, and who had ruined his daughter."

Captain Bradshaw sat thunderstruck. He looked helplessly at Stephen Walker, who corroborated what Alice had said by putting in,—

"Yes, sir, that is what I meant to say. When I came to you, I came to ask for vengeance against the Mr. Bingham I knew to be your nephew. I never thought of Mr. Maynard; I did not know he was your relation at all; I only knew him as the man who had saved my life."

Captain Bradshaw listened as a man in a dream, then leaping on his feet with his quick, hasty way, he exclaimed,—

"Then Frank never had anything to do with it at all?"

"Nothing, uncle, nothing at all."

"He is quite innocent?"

"Quite, uncle—as innocent as we are."

"My God," exclaimed the old officer, "what have I been doing? Oh, what a miserable old man I am, Alice. Was it not enough for me that

I turned a daughter out to die in the street? And now I have left Frank, my dear, dear boy, to struggle for a living, to sail thousands of miles away to work for his wife and children with his own hands? Oh, Alice, why did I ever believe it? What shall I do? You are happier than I am, Alice, for you never believed him quite guilty. You always said it was impossible; while I never doubted it for a moment. My poor boy, my brave, noble Frank!" and he sat down again in his chair, and cried unrestrainedly, "how you must have suffered. Why did you not write—why did you not demand, as you had a right, why you were thrown off? But there, after that letter of mine, who can blame you? As for him," and the old man leaped up again in one of his furies of rage, "as for him—" and he walked up and down the room. "But there," he said, presently, "we can talk of him afterwards. The great question is Frank. Is it too late to stop him, Alice?"

"He sailed yesterday, uncle," Alice said sadly.

"Yes, yes, Alice. So James said; but many of those emigrant vessels touch at Plymouth.

We may stop him yet. We will start there in the morning. What is the ship's name, Alice?"

Alice did not know.

"Never mind, I will go down to the station," and he rang the bell violently. "James, go out and get a carriage. If the places are shut up, wake them up, say I will pay anything—I must have a carriage down to the station. I will telegraph to Prescott to meet me at Plymouth to-morrow, my dear. Yes, it is late; but I will find out where the telegraph clerk lives. He will be glad enough to get up and send a message to London for a ten pound note."

Very much astonished was Arthur Prescott at being awakened at two o'clock in the morning by a loud and continued knocking at his door, and still more, when he opened it, on seeing a railway porter standing there.

"Beg pardon, sir," the man said, touching his hat, "message just come up from Torquay; past usual hours. Clerk thought it might be special; offered to bring it down."

"Thank you," Prescott said. "Wait till I strike a light. Here is half-a-crown for yourself."

Good-night," and Prescott returned to the table to read the telegram. It was quite characteristic of the man who had sent it.

"Infernal mistake about Frank. Damned old fool. Must stop him. Does his ship put in at Plymouth? I start there at once. Telegraph to me at Royal Hotel name of ship. Come there yourself by first train in the morning. Walker is an incoherent ass, not so great an ass as I am. Who'd have thought it? Fred Bingham a knave and a scoundrel. You will understand."

"I can't say I do," Prescott said to himself, as after examining a "Bradshaw" he again got into bed. "It seems that it is all coming right at last; but why, or how, or who Walker is, or what Fred Bingham has got to do with it, or what the mistake was, I have not the least conception. At any rate my course is to go up to the office to inquire whether the ship will put into Plymouth, to telegraph to Captain Bradshaw, and to go down to Plymouth by the eleven o'clock train. I wonder whether Alice Heathcote will be

there; he says yes." And, wondering upon this point, Prescott fell asleep again.

Captain Bradshaw arrived with Alice Heathcote at the Royal Hotel, Plymouth, at eleven in the morning. They had telegraphed, before starting from Torquay, to order rooms at the Royal. It had hardly been a pleasant journey for Alice, for she would like to have sat quiet without talking. She was anxious about the question of catching the emigrant vessel, but even this was a matter of minor importance to her. Her one great emotion was joy that Frank was worthy of her esteem and love, that she could think of him again as her girlhood's trusty friend, as her brother. That it might be a year before they met again, was as nothing now; even had she known she would never meet him again, it would have been scarce a drawback to her pleasure. The only cloud on her sunshine was the feeling of self-reproach for having doubted him. Still, severe upon herself as she was disposed to be for this reason, she could not but allow that under the circumstances she could hardly have thought otherwise, and she consoled herself, that even against the apparently crushing

evidence, she had always uttered a sort of protest of disbelief. With this feeling then of happiness and confidence, she would have liked to lie back in her corner of the railway-carriage, and to enjoy her thoughts, but her uncle was in a most excitable mood. He was as glad as Alice was that his favourite was innocent of the fault which had so long been laid against him, and he was far more anxious than she was, as to the chance of arresting his journey. His gladness and anxiety were both alternated with bursts of reproach against himself for having been so hasty in believing Frank to have been guilty, and in fits of furious anger against Fred Bingham, against whom he fulminated threats of all kinds, mingled with little outbursts of petulance against Alice herself for her indifference. Upon driving up to the door of the Royal, Captain Bradshaw leaped hastily out of the carriage with the agility of a man of thirty.

"Any telegram for me? Captain Bradshaw."

"Yes, sir; I believe there is, up in your room."

"Come along, Alice," her uncle said, hurrying

her movements. "Telegram has come," and then he followed the waiter, muttering angrily at the "infernally stupidity of people taking a telegram upstairs,—why the deuce couldn't they have it ready for me at the door? Just like them." Here they reached the sitting-room and tore open the envelope of the telegram.

"Ship's name 'Tasmania.' Captain has open orders, his putting into Plymouth will depend upon the wind. I come down by eleven train. Delighted matters are cleared up."

"How is the wind?" and the captain turned abruptly to the waiter.

"Wind, sir? Don't know, sir."

"Then go and see, sir," the captain roared, wrathfully; "damme, what are you here for except to know what way the wind is?"

The man returned looking rather sulky.

"The wind is southerly, sir."

"Southerly, is it?" Captain Bradshaw said; "well, I am no wiser, as far as I know, than I was before."

"I think, uncle," Alice said, gently, "the best

plan will be to go down to the sea ; the sailors there will know what wind a ship is most likely to put in here with, and how long she will be with such weather as this in coming round from London."

" Certainly, Alice ; let us start at once."

The questioning was, at Alice's request, left to her, for her uncle's impatient hastiness would have rendered it a far more difficult process. They went up to a sailor, leaning upon the sea-wall, and looking through a telescope at some vessels in the offing.

" Would you kindly tell us whether vessels sailing from London to Australia, and not being bound to put in here, would be likely to do so with the wind blowing as at present ? "

The sailor touched his hat.

" Well, my lady, they might, and they might not. Of course it would depend partly upon the number of passengers, and the sea stock they had on board."

" This is an emigrant ship," Alice said.

" Well, miss," the sailor said, turning round again to the sea, as if to assure himself that no change had taken place, " I should say yes ; it's

a very light breeze, you see, and they will be a week or so coming round from the Downs, if it does not freshen, and they would be likely to put in here to fill up again with water before she takes her departure. I can't say for sure, you see, miss," he said, seeing how anxious his questioner was. "Some captains are more given to putting in here than others are. But I should say if this wind holds, it's odds he comes in; and if it shifts to the south-west, which is likely enough, it makes a foul wind of it, and then he's pretty sure to run in. When did she sail, miss?"

"She left Gravesend early on Tuesday morning."

"Ay, and this is Friday. Well, miss, she is likely enough to be here on Monday or Tuesday, if the wind holds as at present."

"And how are we to know if she comes in?" Alice asked.

"Well, miss, if you want to catch her directly she drops anchor, your best plan will be to go to the signal-station, and ask them to send a man down to your hotel directly she is sighted. Thank your honour, God bless you," as Captain Bradshaw dropped a half-sovereign into his hand.

"Well, upon the whole, Alice, that is as good as we could have expected."

"Yes, I think so, uncle; we have nothing to do but to wait."

In the afternoon, Prescott arrived. Alice was looking from the window when the fly drew up, and she said to her uncle,—

"I will go to my room, uncle, while you explain the matter to Mr. Prescott."

"My dear Mr. Prescott, I am most glad to see you. I find we have a good chance of stopping Frank. What a mistake it has all been to be sure. I always said I was an old fool, but I never really thought so until now."

"I am indeed glad, Captain Bradshaw, that the mistake has been cleared up; but I shall be very glad if you will tell me what it has been about, for to myself, as well as to Frank, the whole affair has been a perfect and complete mystery."

"It must have been so, indeed, Mr. Prescott. What did you think it was, for I suppose you must have had some opinion upon it?"

Prescott hesitated.

"Speak out, Mr. Prescott, I want to know what poor Frank really thought of it."

"Well, Captain Bradshaw, the only thing in which Frank could conceive that he had displeased you, was in thwarting your wishes with regard to Miss Heathcote. He had hoped that you had ceased to feel any anger upon that point before he married; but when he received your letter, his only conclusion, and I own my own agreed with his, was that you had brooded over the matter until it had become a sort of hallucination with you. In fact, that upon that point you had, to speak frankly, gone a little out of your mind. I held that opinion until I saw you at the time your grandson was discovered. By the way in which you spoke, and also by the manner in which Miss Heathcote expressed herself with regard to the breach between you and Frank, I saw that my suspicions were altogether wrong; and that there was some, to me altogether unknown, and perfectly inexplicable, cause of complaint against Frank. I was convinced at the time that it must be an error. I have so perfect a faith in Frank. I have known him so closely and so intimately for so many

years. He is so perfectly frank and open with me about I may almost say every thought, that I was certain he could wilfully have done nothing to forfeit your esteem and that of Miss Heathcote. You refused to explain, and I was forced to put it down to one of those extraordinary mistakes which sometimes occur, and which one can only leave to time to solve. And now I hope, Captain Bradshaw, that you will tell me what this supposed error of Frank could have been ? ”

“ I will tell you, Mr. Prescott. You remember coming one night to me, and telling me that Frank had picked a man up from almost underneath the wheels of an omnibus, and had had a narrow escape of being run over himself ? ”

“ Yes, I remember perfectly ; his name was—let me see—ah—Walker.”

“ Just so, Mr. Prescott. Some little time after, Frank came in one evening and told me that he had been to see Mr. Walker, that he was a superior person for his station of life, and that he had an extremely pretty daughter. I am a man of the world, Mr. Prescott, and I know how these sort of things end. I remember I told him that they were certain to end badly, that a man

either made a fool of himself and married her, or a rascal of himself and seduced her. Frank was at first inclined to laugh at my advice, but at last he owned that I was right, that the girl was a pretty, loveable sort of girl, and that it would be just as well perhaps that he should not call again."

"I remember perfectly," Prescott said, "Frank coming up to my rooms and telling me. I know he said, 'Uncle's a good old boy, and I won't go there any more.' And I really don't think he did. Frank is as open as the day, and he would have been certain to mention it to me."

"I am sure he is, Mr. Prescott; but like an old fool, as I was, I doubted him afterwards, and you must confess I had reason. Somewhere about a year afterwards, Frank was married, and went off on his travels. Well, a fortnight after that a man came to me, nearly out of his mind. He said his name was Walker, that his daughter had been seduced by my nephew under a promise of marriage, that he had promised solemnly to marry her secretly at once, and to make it public at my death, which, he thought, could not be far off. The old man offered to show me letters

proving this, and said that his daughter had drowned herself at the news of my nephew's marriage, and he had just been down to see her body. Now, Mr. Prescott, I appeal to you, how could I doubt that Frank Maynard was a miserable scoundrel?"

Prescott was perfectly thunderstruck.

"But it could not be true, sir. I will wager my life it was not true."

"But it was true, Mr. Prescott; the proofs are undoubted; every word the old man uttered was truth, except that he was mistaken as to the body; for his daughter, after all, did not commit suicide, and is still alive. Now, Mr. Prescott, what could Miss Heathcote and myself think, but that Frank Maynard was utterly unworthy of our esteem?"

"I do not, of course, doubt what you say, Captain Bradshaw," Prescott said, warmly; "I have no doubt you are confident in the proofs you have received; but only from Frank Maynard's own lips will I believe this terrible charge against him."

"Ah," the old man said, sadly; "that's what I ought to have done. I ought to have gone to

Frank and said, 'This is the charge. You shall be your own judge. Can you, after this, ever be anything to me again?' But then, Mr. Prescott, you must remember, that much as I loved Frank Maynard, and well as I believed I knew him, you knew far more of him than I did. A father can know but little of his son's private life. His familiar friend can judge him much better than a father can. You know what each other does; there are no secrets between you. Young men know young men as they are; old men only know them as they choose to be known. You see you had the advantage of me. Knowing Frank's inner life, you consider yourself capable of being assured he would not do this. Knowing Frank only as an old man knows a young one, I was obliged to believe the evidence was true."

"But, Captain Bradshaw, your telegram said it had been all a mistake, and yet you now say the evidence was perfectly true."

"And both statements are correct, Mr. Prescott. Mr. Walker told me my nephew had basely seduced his daughter, under promise of marriage, and he spoke truly. I, knowing that Frank knew her, of course supposed that the accusation

was against him. Mr. Walker did not even know Frank was my nephew, but yet he spoke the truth. My nephew did seduce his daughter, under promise of marriage ; but only last night did I find out that the nephew who did it was Fred Bingham, who, as far as Walker knew, was the only nephew I had."

"I see it all now," Prescott said, delighted. "But do you mean to say, sir, is it possible, that Fred Bingham has all this time known the reason of Frank's disgrace, has taken his place in your affections, and allowed him to be disgraced for his own crime?"

"He has done all that, Mr. Prescott, and he is a damned scoundrel. By Gad, sir," the old man said, furiously, "I am an old man, but if I wasn't his uncle I'd horsewhip him in the public streets—I'd put a bullet in his body—I'd, by Gad, sir, I'd have him flayed alive."

"Indeed, he must be a great rascal, Captain Bradshaw ; I never liked him ; I always distrusted him, but I never gave him credit for such villany as this."

For some time longer they talked the matter

over, and Prescott soothed the old man's self-condemnation, by assuring him that he did not see that, under the circumstances, he could have doubted Frank's guilt.

"But you ought to have seen him, sir; you ought at least to have given him an opportunity of defence."

"So I ought, Mr. Prescott; but Frank was a little—just a little—to blame, too. He knew how I loved him, and he ought to have conquered his pride, and to have insisted upon knowing precisely what he was charged with. Ah! if he had but answered my letter, and demanded an explanation, all this misery and mistake might have been avoided."

"But you seem to forget, Captain Bradshaw, that Frank did answer the letter, and that you returned it unopened, without a word of explanation."

"Returned his letter, Mr. Prescott!—returned his letter unopened! You are labouring under some mistake. Frank never sent me a single line; so it was impossible I could have returned it."

"I can only say, Mr. Bradshaw, that I

know, from my positive knowledge, that Frank did write, because although I was away at the time, when he told me about it, he went to his desk and took out the letter and indignantly threw it upon the table, and said—‘There, Prescott, there is my only answer, my own letter returned unopened.’”

Captain Bradshaw sat stupefied; he could not doubt what Prescott said. After a pause he rose, without a word, and knocked at the door of Alice Heathcote’s bedroom, which communicated with the sitting-room:

“Alice, please come here.”

Alice came in.

“Oh! Mr. Prescott, so you have heard it all. Poor Frank, have we not been cruel? and you always believed in him. But we will make it up to him now; won’t we, uncle?”

“My dear,” her uncle said, in a tone of mild despair, “another mystery has arisen in the course of this extraordinary circumstance, and I want you to tell me whether I or Mr. Prescott is dreaming. I was saying what a pity it was that Frank, knowing how I loved him, had not put aside his pride and written to me, demanding

an explanation. Mr. Prescott asserts that Frank did write, and that I returned his letter unopened."

"Oh, no, uncle; never. Not a line came from Frank. Do you not remember those three weary, weary days, after his return from abroad, when we waited—hoping, praying that Frank would write some line of extenuation, some prayer for pardon? Do you not remember, that at the end of the three days you said to me—'It is no use waiting any longer, Alice, let us go abroad?'"

And Alice Heathcote's eyes filled with tears at the thought of that sad time.

"No, no, Mr. Prescott, you are mistaken. Frank never wrote."

"I am puzzled, Miss Heathcote, and of course credit your and your uncle's assertion, that you never received the letter; but I must re-assert that Frank did write, for I saw his letter. It was returned unopened, in an envelope apparently directed, for I know his handwriting, by Captain Bradshaw, and sealed with his crest. By the way, it was the very seal on that envelope which, two years afterwards, Evan Holl recog-

nised, and which led to the discovery of your grandson."

Captain Bradshaw and Alice looked at each other in astonishment.

"This letter," Prescott went on, after a pause, "must have reached your house, because it was returned in an envelope sealed with a seal kept in the house. You never received it. Who did? There must have been some treachery at work, Captain Bradshaw, and it is needless to point whose interest it was to suppress this letter; and to do it in such a way as to make it impossible for Frank, with any self-respect whatever, to write again. The exact effect, in fact, which it did have."

"He never could have done such a thing as that, Mr. Prescott," Alice Heathcote said, doubtfully.

"I do not know, Miss Heathcote; Fred Bingham was playing for high stakes. At that time James had not been discovered. Your uncle had told him that he had disowned Frank, and made him his sole heir. He had kept silent as to his own fault and Frank's innocence. He knew, therefore, that the result of a meeting must be

the eventual discovery of the truth, and his own absolute disgrace. Under the circumstances, then, he would of course have used every effort to prevent any letter Frank might write from reaching you. He might have bribed the postman to let him see all the letters before delivering them at the house, or he might have paid one of your servants to keep them back for him."

"By Gad!" Captain Bradshaw said, in a violent passion, "I will get to the bottom of this business, whatever it costs me. No wonder Frank and you thought I was mad. They thought I was out of my mind, Alice. By Gad, I will have some one hung for it before I have done;" and Captain Bradshaw walked furiously up and down the room.

"Who was in the habit of taking the letters from the postman?"

"The footman," Alice said; "he has been with us ever since—he went abroad with us—he is down-stairs now."

"Will you let me speak to him, Captain Bradshaw? But if you do, please let me do it my own way. If we frighten him, he will of course say nothing."

Captain Bradshaw rang the bell. "Tell my footman to come up."

"We want to ask you a few questions, James," Prescott said, when the man entered. "You have been in Captain Bradshaw's service for some time?"

"Eight years, sir, altogether."

"Now, James, I want you to answer my questions, just as if Captain Bradshaw were not here. You understand me? You are to speak just as you think. Well, James, you have found Captain Bradshaw a kind master?"

"Yes, sir," the man said, "he is a very good master."

"A little irritable at times, James—eh?"

The man, who had some sense of quiet humour, replied—"Yes, sir, lets out a bit, but soon gets over it."

Alice Heathcote smiled; and Captain Bradshaw, angry as he was, laughed outright.

"Just so, James—lets out a little, and soon gets over it. Still, on the whole, you get on very well with him, and would do anything in your way to serve him?"

"That I would," the man said, earnestly, for he was really attached to his master.

Prescott saw that he meant what he said, and adopted his course of questioning accordingly. "Now, you remember the time before you went on to the Continent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you remember anything particular about that time?"

The man was silent.

"Speak out, James; Captain Bradshaw wants you to speak the exact truth."

"Well, sir, I remember it well, because master was awful cantankerous about that time, worse than he ever was before or since; I thought I should have had to have left him."

"Have you any idea why Captain Bradshaw was more irritable than usual about that time?"

Again the man was silent.

"Come, James, it is a matter of importance to your master—I may say of great importance. I am not asking these questions for amusement."

"Well, sir," the man said, "I believe master was bothered by letters from a man who was threatening him."

Captain Bradshaw and Alice Heathcote uttered simultaneous ejaculations of surprise. But Prescott made a sign to them to be quiet, and proceeded with his cross-examination.

"Quite so, James ; your master was troubled by a letter-writer, who threatened him. Well, James, Mr. Bingham, when he told you that, told you that it was important, for your master's sake, that he should not receive these threatening letters."

The man turned very pale.

"Come, James, you acted for the best, I have no doubt ; you meant to do your master a service, and Captain Bradshaw will not be angry with you, if you do but speak the truth. You see we have all the particulars, we only wish to receive the corroboration from your own lips. Mr. Bingham told you that, for your master's sake, it was important he should not receive these threatening letters, and he asked you to show all that came by post before giving them to your master ?"

"Yes, sir, that was just it ; he said he had found out the man who was sending the letters, and that he would be able in a few days to put a

stop to it, and save master from being bothered. The day the letter did come, he told me I need not trouble any more, for that he was to see the man that night, and that master would not be annoyed in future."

"The infernal scoundrel!" Captain Bradshaw broke out; "the infernal scoundrel!"

"One more question, and I have done, James," Prescott said. "Did you see what Mr. Bingham did with the letter?"

"No, sir; he said he wanted to write a letter, and he went into the dining-room and stayed there a few minutes. He did write, I remember; at least the inkstand was on the table, and the taper had been alight; I remember, because there was a blot of sealing-wax upon the cloth, and I had a deal of trouble in getting it out."

"That is all, James; Captain Bradshaw will quite believe that you did it for the best, and acted under Mr. Bingham's instructions in the matter. But let it be a lesson to you never again to tamper with letters, when I tell you that Captain Bradshaw's annoyance was caused entirely because that letter had not arrived as he expected it; that it was entirely because he did

not receive it that he went on to the Continent, and that the very greatest unhappiness has been caused in his mind, and in that of other people, by his not getting it. That will do, James."

The man retired without a word; for he saw by Captain Bradshaw's face that anything he could say would only make matters worse. He went down-stairs in a state of great despondency, for he was much attached to his master. Late in the evening he was taken up to bed in a state of maudlin intoxication—for the first time since he had been in Captain Bradshaw's service—and with many entreaties that they would only bring that little beggar here, and see what he'd give him. There was a silence after he had left the room.

"The whole mystery is cleared up, you see," Prescott said.

"Don't talk about it," Alice Heathcote remarked; "it is too shocking and unnatural."

"I must go out," Captain Bradshaw said. "If I stop here and can't thrash some one, I shall have a fit. I must walk it off. Mr. Prescott, please amuse my niece, I shall be back by dinner time."

And so he went out; and anyone who saw him as he paced up and down the esplanade with the most rapid steps, striking with his cane viciously at every post he passed, must have come to the conclusion that he was a terribly excitable old gentleman indeed.

There was a little silence after Captain Bradshaw had left, and then Alice Heathcote said, "Now, Mr. Prescott, I want you to tell me all about Frank and his wife; you are aware I know nothing whatever of their life for the last three years. I only know the Bank failed, and poor Frank lost all his money, and that they went down into Yorkshire on a railroad. Please tell me all about them."

Prescott told all the story; how happy they had been together, and how well they had borne the loss of their fortune; and how brave and hopeful and true Frank's wife had been.

"Dear Katie; I shall love her so much," Alice said. "How happy Frank has been in having such a brave heart to stand by his side in his misfortune. How proud he must be of her."

"Yes," Prescott said; "his wife is indeed

one in a thousand, Miss Heathcote. Frank has been a very lucky man, in spite of his troubles."

"This quite reminds me of old times, Mr. Prescott, when you were a boy at Westminster; Frank's faithful Achates, as he used to call you."

"Yes; that's a long time back now, Miss Heathcote; you used to call me Prescott in those days."

"Ah, I was a little girl in those days, Mr. Prescott, with short frocks, and a small development of respect. There is six o'clock striking; I must go up and dress for dinner."

Prescott sat quiet for some time. It was a long time back. Twelve years; and he had loved her ever since; might he yet hope to win this great prize some day?

CHAPTER XV.

RECONCILED.

CAPTAIN BRADSHAW returned to dinner in a greatly mollified state, and that meal passed off very pleasantly. The talk turned principally upon Frank and his doings, for Captain Bradshaw, as well as Alice, was anxious to know all that had occurred since they had been separated. It was very pleasant to them to be able to talk unrestrainedly upon a subject which they both had so much at heart, but which had been so long interdicted. Only once was Captain Bradshaw's wrath kindled into expression.

"And do you mean to tell me, sir, do you mean to tell me, that that infernal little rascal, after cheating Frank out of his place here, induced him to go down to Yorkshire, kept him doing nothing until he had spent the little money he took down, and then kept him at

work like a common foreman on two pounds a week ? ”

“ Yes, sir, that is all Frank got.”

“ I wonder Frank did not break his neck for him. I wonder how he stood it a single day.”

“ How could he help it, sir ? He had not a penny at the time ; both he and his wife were too proud to write to her relations. I know from what he has told me, that over and over again he was on the edge of breaking out, but with his wife and children what could he do ? As he told me, he ground his teeth and bore it. But it has a little changed Frank, Captain Bradshaw. It has made him rather sore, and I think you must prepare yourself for a little difficulty when you first meet him. Frank would have cheerfully borne anything himself, but it has tried him very much to see his wife suffer ; and I can assure you, from what he has told me, that she has actually suffered. Katie was as bright as ever when she came up to London before starting, but there was no mistaking from her face that she has had a great deal to go through. Frank never told even me, to whom he told nearly everything, the shifts to which they were re-

duced ; but there was a look of sharp pain came across his face when he spoke of those times, which told me more than any details could have done."

There was silence for a short time, and then Prescott, desirous of changing the subject, said, "I may not see you to-morrow morning before I start for town, Captain Bradshaw ; but I hope you will telegraph to me the instant the ship is signalled. I will come down by the next train."

"Go up to town, Mr. Prescott ! Quite impossible, my dear sir ; we cannot spare you. I shall want you above all things to explain matters to Frank ; because it's as likely as not that he will not listen to me for a moment. Come, Mr. Prescott, it is Friday to-day ; you cannot get up to town until to-morrow afternoon. The next day is Sunday, and the ship will very likely come in on Monday. Pooh, pooh ! my dear boy ; it is out of the question."

"I really have a good deal to do," Prescott said ; "I told the clerk I should be sure to return by to-night's mail ; but, as you say, I should not gain much by it, and I would very much rather stay here. So, if you really

think my presence is at all essential at the meeting between yourself and Frank——”

“I do think it most essential, my dear Prescott; he knows anyhow that you are his sincere friend, while he looks upon me as a despotic, savage, half-insane old man.”

And so Prescott remained, and was very happy for the next three days. It was so pleasant being with Alice, walking beside her, sitting with her, and having long quiet tête-à-têtes, while Captain Bradshaw read the paper or dozed in his chair. The wind still held to the south with a little west, and was very light and uncertain, and it was not until the morning of Tuesday, as they were at breakfast, that the messenger came in to say that a vessel was just coming into the roads, with the “Tasmania’s” number flying.

“Thank God!” Captain Bradshaw ejaculated, fervently; “now, Alice, finish your breakfast, my dear, and let us be off as soon as we can. The sooner we get it over the better; for I can tell you I feel as nervous as a schoolboy going up to confess a fault to his master.”

It was a long row out to the “Tasmania,” and seemed to them all even longer than it really

was. They were very silent. As they neared the ship, round which several other boats were already lying, while others were, like themselves, approaching her, Prescott said—

“I think I can see Frank leaning over the bulwarks. I think it as well that he should not notice us until we are fairly on board. He will not know you through your veil, Miss Heathcote, and Captain Bradshaw and myself will keep our heads bent.”

As they neared the ladder, Alice put her hand on her uncle's arm. “Dear uncle, you will not be hasty whatever he says to you? Remember how he has suffered, and how unjustly.”

“No, my dear; you need not be afraid; I have been too hasty already. Nothing Frank can say will be more than I know I deserve. You can trust me for once to keep my temper.”

They ascended the steps, and then Prescott pointed out to them a group standing a short distance off, looking at the land. Kate had baby in her arms, while Frank was holding Charley on his shoulder.

“Please wait here, and look over the side,” Prescott said, in accordance with their pre-

viciously arranged plans; "while I find the captain."

They did so, and Prescott speedily found the officer. In a few words Prescott explained to him that he had come off with a gentleman and lady to see Mr. Maynard.

"And a capital fellow, too," the captain said, warmly; "one of the right sort, and no mistake, while as for his wife, she's a trump, sir, that's what she is; no grumbling, no discontent, takes everything as it comes, and is as cheery and as bright as if she had been accustomed to it all her life."

"I am afraid, captain, you will not be pleased when I tell you our errand. An unfortunate mistake has led to a quarrel between him and his uncle, a very rich old gentleman, to whom he will be the sole heir. The mistake has been cleared up and explained since you left the river, and his uncle is here with me to take him home again."

"I shall be sorry indeed to lose him, for he has been the life and soul of the passengers since we started; kept them in good spirits, got up games—just the fellow to sail with; but, if it's

for his advantage, I shall not grudge him his fortune. Is there anything I can do for you ? ”

“ Yes, captain, I wanted to ask you if you would kindly let me have the use of your cabin for a few minutes ? ”

“ With all my heart,” and the captain led the way to his cabin.

“ This way, uncle.” And Prescott and Captain Bradshaw went into the cabin, which was on deck, while Alice remained looking over the bulwarks in her former position. Frank was romping with Charley, and keeping him in screams of delight by pretending to be about to throw him over the bulwarks, when one of the boys came up.

“ Please, sir, the captain will be glad if you will step into his cabin ? ”

“ Certainly,” Frank said, setting the boy down upon the deck. “ There, Charley, don’t get into mischief. I expect it is about the luggage, Katie ; I was asking him last night whether he would have some of it up on deck when we had anchored.”

Kate’s attention was thoroughly taken up now

with the two children, for Charley evinced an inclination to toddle after his papa.

"Please stop Charley, Mr. Cairns," Kate cried, laughingly, to a passenger near the child.

The gentleman addressed was on the point of seizing the child, when a lady, who was coming up, caught it up in her arms, and bore him struggling violently back to Kate.

"You little scamp," his mother said; "if you don't keep quiet by me, I must send for nurse;" and then, looking up and seeing that Charley was in the arms of a stranger, she stopped. She had never seen Alice Heathcote but once, and then only for a brief moment, and she did not in the slightest recognise the lady who stood before her.

Alice put the child down by her side, and said, "You do not know me. I am Alice Heathcote."

Kate drew back then. She drew herself up haughtily. "I suppose you wish to see my husband, Miss Heathcote. I will send for him."

"His uncle is in the cabin with him," Alice said, quietly; "he has come on board to ex-

plain to ——," and Alice's intuition taught her that Kate would not like to hear her husband's Christian name from her lips, "to my cousin that a terrible mistake has taken place—and that—that—"

"Charley, come here," Kate said, sharply, as the child was pulling at the strange lady's dress. "It is rather late for explanation, Miss Heathcote. The time for that has long passed. Thank God! Frank and I can for the future depend upon ourselves."

"Cousin," Alice said, humbly, "will you listen to me—will you let me speak with you alone for a little while?"

Kate stood irresolute for a moment, and then seeing her nurse approaching gave the baby to her, and telling Charley to be a good boy, led the way to their little cabin. Kate was very sore with their visitor—sore because she remembered the cold, proud face with which she had passed Frank in Knightsbridge—sore because she had sent him money when he was in poverty. With these thoughts, Kate led the way with an air which might have befitted her had she been a queen and Miss Heathcote her

bond slave. When they entered the cabin Kate said,—

“Now, Miss Heathcote, I am willing of course to listen to you; but, I tell you, I am sorry you have come. We have done with England. We have learned the true value of our friends, and we are content to be all in all to each other.”

“You have one friend still in whom you trust, I think,” Alice said; “Arthur Prescott is here with my uncle.”

“Yes,” Kate said, “he is a friend—yes, Frank trusts him, and so do I.”

Alice hesitated, and then laying aside her previously quiet tone, she said, “Cousin Kate, Frank’s wife, listen to me! Do you know I love Frank as a brother; do you know—I can humble myself to you—that I once loved him more? Do you know, that I once so loved him that I could have gone through even what you have gone through to know that he loved me? I learned from his own lips that it was not to be, that he loved me as a sister, but nothing more. I accepted the fact, Kate, I fought against my love, and I learned to look at him only as a dear brother. Do you think I did not

suffer? What have your sufferings been to what mine then were? You have borne disappointment, neglect, want, but you have had Frank always with you. You have known that he prized you beyond all beside. But I conquered myself; I heard that you had won his heart, and upon the day of his marriage I could have stood beside the altar and could have listened to his vows to you without a pang, and could have loved you as a sister for his sake. Then, Kate, I heard he was—oh, forgive me for saying so now! forgive me for believing it!—that he was wicked; that he had done a dishonourable, wicked action. You can smile proudly at the accusation, you are his wife, I was only his sister; I really never believed it in my heart, and yet my uncle told me that doubt was impossible. Still I hoped—hoped against hope—that it was not so. Frank came back, and no letter came in answer to my uncle's reproach to him. Yes," she said, in answer to Kate's movement; "we know now that he wrote, but my uncle never got it, it was sent back by other hands. I will tell you how presently,—and then, Kate, all hope died out; we travelled abroad,

and tried hard to forget the past. Now, only since you sailed from London we have learned the truth, have learned how unjustly and cruelly we have doubted Frank. Oh, cousin, make allowance for me! I know what you must have thought of us; but in our place we could not but have doubted. Kate, I have heard so much of you these last three days. I do so want to love you, and to be loved by you. I know you are so worthy to be Frank's wife; can you not forgive me, Kate? can you not, thinking of what I have suffered, take me to your heart?"

Kate had listened at first coldly, and then tearfully, and at last, as Alice ceased she threw herself upon Alice's neck, and cried, "Oh, Alice! why did we not know each other before?"

With the exception of Fanny Larpent, who was too young for Kate to confide her great troubles to, she had, since she married, had no female friend, and she had often longed for some one in whom she could really trust and confide all the feelings which she had so bravely concealed from her husband. When Alice began to speak, she had hardened herself against her. She had determined not to melt, but this cry for

forgiveness of the stately woman before her had broken down the barrier she had set up; and Kate, when she once gave way, gave way altogether. To both women tears were a relief. Alice, who had cried most before, was the first to recover now.

"I must tell you the whole story, Katie. I may call you Katie, mayn't I?"

"Yes, Alice, but I don't want to know the story. I am content to know it was all a mistake, and I am glad to hear that Frank's uncle has come to say good-bye to him; for Frank will, I know, always be glad to think kindly of his uncle, and of you, Alice," she put in; "Frank never believed you were against him."

"But, Katie," Alice said, "we have not come to say good-bye at all, we have come to take you on shore. Yes, really, Katie," she said, earnestly, as Kate made a motion of positive denial. "Poor James, uncle's grandson, cannot live long, and uncle wants Frank and you to come and live with him and be his children."

"He has got Mr. Bingham," Kate said, coldly; "neither Frank nor I want to take his place."

"Fred Bingham has turned out a very wicked man, Katie. It was for his fault that we have doubted poor Frank; but it has all come to light now, and uncle will never see him again."

"Really, Alice?" Kate exclaimed. "It is very wicked, I know—but then I am not, not at all good—but I hate Fred Bingham; if I was a man I should kill him. You may look shocked, Alice, but I don't care, I would kill him." And there is no doubt that Fred Bingham would have fared but badly if he had fallen into Kate Maynard's hands.

"And now, Katie, I will tell you the whole story; and I am sure, if you can forget for a moment you are Frank's wife, and can put yourself in our place, you will allow that there is a good excuse for us in having believed what we heard, and having doubted all we had previously known of him."

Very quietly and clearly Alice Heathcote went through the long and complicated story. Kate listened attentively to it, and when Alice had finished she said, frankly,—

"Indeed, Alice, I can't blame Captain Bradshaw or you for believing this story. I am very,

very glad it was not told to me, for I don't see how I could have helped believing it myself."

"And if Frank hesitates, if he will not make friends with my uncle, Katie, will you persuade him?"

"Yes, Alice; I have been willing enough to go with Frank, but I love the old country, and shall be very, very glad to stay here."

Frank Maynard had entered the captain's cabin, and there had at once seen Prescott.

"My dear old man," he exclaimed, "this is kind of you; come to say a last good-bye, eh? Well, I can tell you we are as jolly as possible. Katie is a capital sailor, and the cubs are as good as—" and here he stopped abruptly, seeing the third person in the cabin, whom, standing a little behind the door, he had hitherto not noticed. For a moment an indignant flush flew up over his face, and then his expression softened, and he said,

"Uncle, you here! Well, I am glad. You were a very kind friend in old days, and I am glad to find you have come to say, God speed you on your journey."

The old man was much affected.

"Oh Frank, Frank ! it has all been a mistake ; a cruel mistake ; but it is not too late, my boy ; I will make it up."

"Stop, uncle," Frank said, coldly, "I wish to have no excuses. You have believed you had good reasons for casting me off. That is all past now. You have come to say good-bye, and I am ready to say good-bye, uncle, with all my heart. I wish to carry no regrets with me in my new life. We will shake hands, if you please, without any excuses."

"No, no, Frank, you do not understand me. It has all been a terrible mistake, but it is all cleared up now, I want you to come back with me and live with me, to be my heir, and—"

"Thank you," Frank said, bitterly, "I have had enough of trusting in others. I have done with it. Fool as I was, I believed that men I loved and trusted, loved and trusted me. I have done with that — I believe in my own right arm now, and trust to that alone. Please God, I will earn a living in future without thanks to any man. No, uncle, I go on my own path, and trust to myself alone for the future."

"But, Frank," the old man said, humbly, "Frank, listen to me; you have been cruelly wronged; but—"

"Be it so, uncle. My conscience absolves me from all fault. I am glad you have found out you are mistaken; glad to say good-bye kindly with you. But no, uncle, I am no longer a boy, and am not to be thrown off and whistled back again at the first call. Do you know what I have gone through, uncle? do you know I have not known how to pay for my wife's daily food; do you know I have seen her exposed—" and Frank's voice rose in his anger, "to hardship; do you know I have put up with indignities and insults, and have had to bear them in quiet for her sake; do you know that I have borne things patiently which I blush now to think of—insults for which, as there is a God in heaven, I would have killed him had it not been for her. And now you talk of a mistake, of staying here and forgetting the past—no, uncle. The past will never be forgotten. Things like this last till death, and while I live I will never forget or forgive. If ever in my life I meet him alone, I will kill

him as mercilessly and pitilessly as I would a dog. I would, Prescott, so help me God!" And Frank strode backwards and forwards across the little cabin in a fury of passion.

Captain Bradshaw had not interfered in any way to check the torrent of Frank's indignation. He felt by the passion with which he spoke how intensely Frank must have suffered, and his sympathies were wholly with him. When Frank ceased speaking, the old man made a gesture to Prescott to intervene.

"My dear Frank," Prescott began, "you know, I hope and believe, that I am a true friend, and that I would not hesitate to give my life to serve you."

"Yes, yes, old man," Frank said, warmly; "you know that I rely upon you as upon myself."

"I, Frank, have your welfare, and more, I have your honour, at heart as you have yourself. I ask you to sit down quietly and hear the story I will tell you. You will then see how the very natural doubt of your honour arose in your uncle's mind; you will see how, indeed—and I your friend say it—it was impossible for

him to have acted otherwise than he did. You will, when you have heard it, be the first to allow that you yourself, an impulsive man, would have acted exactly as he did; you will see that a tissue of falsehood has been thrown round you by Fred Bingham. Bad as you believe him to be, you know absolutely nothing of what he is capable. If you will but listen, Frank, fairly and dispassionately, you will, I am sure, grant that there is nothing which can prevent you with the highest feeling of self-respect, standing in the place as your uncle's heir, from which Fred Bingham has been cast out for ever."

The last words of Prescott had more effect with Frank Maynard than all that he had previously said.

"If that is the case, Prescott, I shall be easily satisfied. God knows I have never courted my uncle's money; that I loved him for his kindness to me as a boy, and not with any idea of the money he might leave me. If I only know that Fred Bingham will not be his heir, I should care not one single scrap if every farthing were to go to the Charities of London."

"Then you will give me a patient hearing, Frank?"

"Yes, Prescott, I will," and Frank sat down resolutely to listen. Step by step Prescott went through the whole story, and explained every particular of the deep-laid scheme by which Frank had been made to bear the blame of another's sin. Frank had promised to be a patient listener, but he hardly kept his promise. He constantly interrupted Prescott's story with ejaculations of rage, questions, and furious outbreaks. When Prescott had finished, Captain Bradshaw said,—

"There, Frank, now you see how I was deceived; can you forgive an old man for having been taken in by a scoundrel, and for having doubted you?"

"My dear uncle, my dear, dear uncle," Frank cried, leaping up and taking the old man's two hands; "forgive? There is nothing to forgive! I am so glad to find that it has all been a mistake, and that as I am restored to you, you are restored to me. I don't care a rap for the property, uncle; leave it to whom you like; but I am very happy to feel that we are to each other what we used to be."

"And you will leave the ship, Frank, and come ashore with us?"

"I don't know, uncle," Frank said, doubtfully; "My Katie's a very proud little woman in her way, and she has been sorely tried. I am quite ready to forget all the past, but I cannot answer for her. She will not move an inch for the sake of position or money—indeed they will, I know, make her more resolute to go than she might otherwise be. I shall tell her the story, uncle, and leave it in her hands."

"Quite right, Frank, but you need not tell her the story. I think she knows it by this time. Alice is with her."

"Mind, uncle," Frank said, leading the way out, "I leave it with Katie; if she is the least sore—and you know she will naturally be less ready to make allowances than I am—if she is the least sore; if she says to me, 'I would rather go, Frank;' I go. I shall be very, very glad to know that I go friends with you, uncle—that this miserable misunderstanding is cleared up; but, whatever the pecuniary consequence to me, however much you may be grieved or offended, I abide by Katie's wishes. Halloo, Charley boy,"

he broke off, as his child came running up to him, holding up his arms to be lifted up. "Where's mamma?"

"Down in cabin, Pappy; left Charley here with Jane; gone down with lady."

Frank went down-stairs with his uncle and Prescott. He went to his cabin door, and opened it. Kate was sitting on the berth, with her arms round Alice Heathcote's waist. Both had evidently been crying.

"Come in, Frank; here is a friend."

There was no hesitation on Alice's part. She rose from her seat, and fell crying into Frank's arms. "Oh, Frank, Frank, can you forgive us?"

Frank kissed her cheek, and said, "There is nothing to forgive, Alice. It has been a cruel mistake, but none of us are to blame; it is all over now." Then releasing her, he turned to Kate. "Kiss me, darling. Thank God all this is over, and we are all friends again. This is my uncle."

"Will you kiss me, Katie?" the old man said, "I have been an old fool, but Frank has forgiven me. Will you forgive me, too?"

"Yes," Kate said, kissing him frankly; "it is all over now."

"It is left to you, Katie," the old man said. "All our future is in your hands. Frank is my heir in any case; in any case he will have an income at once to live here, or wherever he chooses. It is for you to decide, Katie. Frank has left it entirely in your hands. Will you go out to Australia, and be happy in each other, or will you stay here and cheer an old man's life?"

This time Kate gave a kiss without being asked, and said simply, "I always hated the thoughts of going out of England. If Frank really wishes to stay, I shall be very, very glad."

And so it was settled. A short conversation only was necessary to arrange as to details. Captain Bradshaw himself proposed that as the things they had got could be of no possible use to them in England, it would be the best plan to divide them among the emigrants. The captain being called in, agreed to get them on deck during the voyage, to put them all up to auction, and divide the proceeds among the

poorer emigrants. And then summoning the astonished and delighted Evan and Jane, the party—after a great hand-shaking, and many good wishes between Frank and Kate and their late fellow-voyagers—got into their boat, and, amid three hearty cheers from the emigrants, pulled for shore.

CHAPTER XVI.

SQUARING ACCOUNTS.

It was a happy party which sat down to dinner that day at the Royal. Captain Bradshaw was delighted with his newly-found niece, and Kate on her part was no less pleased with the cheery, warm-hearted, kindly old Indian officer. So much did they take to each other that both Alice and Frank laughingly declared that they should be jealous. They had dined early, for Prescott's business absolutely obliged him to go up by the mail train to London. For the present they had formed no plans; but it was arranged that at any rate for a fortnight they should go down to Torquay, where Prescott promised to join them in a few days. Frank walked with him down to the railway station and saw him off, and upon his return found his wife and Captain Bradshaw vying with each other in their praises of his

friend. Alice was sitting by thoughtfully, with a flush upon her cheek.

"I do wish I could do something for him, Frank, but legal promotion is not in my line."

"I am afraid Prescott is hardly eligible for a place on the bench yet, uncle. He is very hard working and clever, but the bar is slow work."

"I suppose he has not much beyond his profession?"

"Very little, uncle; I know his income was not sufficient to keep him before he got any practice, and he was obliged to draw upon his capital. But he told me last year that he was paying his expenses now, which was highly satisfactory considering he had only been called four years. Dear old Prescott," Frank said, enthusiastically, "I wish he could get some very nice girl with plenty of money to marry him."

Frank had at the moment spoken without any special meaning; but Kate, who had long known from Frank where Prescott had given his heart, glanced up at Alice, and saw that the colour had mounted up to her very forehead. Kate drew her own conclusions from this, and at night

confided to Frank that she thought that Alice Heathcote would some day carry out his wish regarding Prescott.

"Do you mean that you think she will marry him, Kate?"

Kate nodded.

"He's an awfully good fellow, Katie; I only hope you may be right. If she does she will have to ask him, for I feel pretty sure Prescott will never summon up courage sufficient to ask her. In spite of Alice being an heiress, and Prescott a poor man, I shall consider her to be a lucky girl."

"I think so, too, Frank; it's lucky for you he did not come down with you that time into Staffordshire, for there is no saying that I might not have taken a fancy to him."

"Ah, Katie! but he might not have taken a fancy to you." Frank laughed. "He has been thinking of Alice for I don't know how long."

"Well, Frank," Kate said, looking round the room, "the 'Tasmania' was well enough, you know, but this is more comfortable after all."

"I should think so," Frank laughed, "and thank goodness there will be no deck-washing

over our heads at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

The next day the party were installed at Torquay. James greeted Frank Maynard with a quiet warmth. He had been rather better during the time that his uncle had been away, and seemed very happy under the quiet nursing of Carry Walker. She came to him every day after breakfast, walked out beside his chair, and went home again to her father during the afternoon, which James spent in the drawing-room with his friends. Dinner over he went up to his room, and there Carry and usually Alice Heathcote chatted or read to him until he went to bed. Evan had now taken the place of his former attendant, and drew him in his chair when he went out. And many were the visitors of Torquay, who looked pityingly back at the evidently dying cripple, and at the quiet sad-looking young lady in mourning who walked beside him.

Prescott came down according to promise three or four days after the others, and upon the morning after his arrival, Captain Bradshaw took him aside.

"Now; Mr. Prescott, I want to ask your opinion and advice. I have had a letter this morning from that rascal, Fred Bingham. He says that he is not particularly busy at present, and that he intends to come down here to stop a day or two. He will arrive, he says, to-morrow, in the middle of the day."

"Do you think of stopping him?"

"No, no," Captain Bradshaw said, exultingly, "on no account whatever. I only wish I could invite the whole of Torquay to be present at the meeting. I am only debating in my mind whether I will horsewhip the scoundrel or leave it to Frank."

"No, no, Captain Bradshaw, his punishment will be heavy enough. Not that I pity him, for I do not think any possible punishment would be too great. If I thought horsewhipping would increase his punishment, I would say horsewhip him as much as you please; or rather let Frank do it; but I think quiet contempt, and the utter downfall of all his schemes, will be a punishment greater than any severe personal pain could give him."

"I am sorry you are not in favour of horse-

whipping," Captain Bradshaw said, discontentedly; "my fingers, old as they are, are itching for it. Don't you think — eh?"

"No, indeed, sir," Prescott said, laughing; "besides he would have his action for assault and battery, and we should have a public scandal, which for all our sakes, but more especially for the sake of Miss Walker, we ought to avoid."

"Yes, yes," the old man said, "I forgot the poor girl. Of course you are right. What should you advise then?"

"I should say, sir, let him come up into the drawing-room, where just yourself, James, and I shall be. Then I leave it to you to state the facts. I would tell Miss Heathcote and Katie that he is coming; but I would not let Frank know anything about it. Keep him out of the way somehow, else we shall have a violent scene. Frank is an easy-going man, and I never saw him but once or twice fairly roused; but when he is, Captain Bradshaw, he is terrible, and strong as he is, the whole of us together would hardly keep him from nearly killing Fred Bingham if he once got near him."

"Serve him right too," Captain Bradshaw

muttered to himself. "Well, Prescott, arrange it as you like."

Alice and Kate were accordingly warned; but Prescott had some difficulty in persuading the latter to agree that Frank should be kept in the dark, her sentiments being entirely in accordance with those of Captain Bradshaw in the matter of horsewhipping. At last, however, she reluctantly gave way to the arguments of Alice and Prescott, and agreed to keep the matter from Frank. It had been arranged that nothing should be said to James until the morning, as they did not wish to excite him.

That evening, as Carry and Alice came together out of the room of the invalid, Alice said, "Please come to my room, Miss Walker, for a moment; I want to speak to you alone. I think it right to tell you, in order that you may leave earlier than usual, so as to avoid any risk of a meeting, that he, you understand who I mean, will be here to-morrow at one o'clock."

Carry turned a little pale. "I am not afraid to meet him, Miss Heathcote. It is not I who have to be ashamed, now I know him as he is. My onlyshame is that I should ever have loved

him, ever have been deceived by him. I have long ceased to think of him as anything to me. Now I despise him utterly. Thank you all the same, Miss Heathcote, but I am not afraid of meeting him;" and with an air of pride, which sat strangely upon her usually quiet figure, Carry Walker went home to her father.

The next day, at a quarter to one, Alice Heathcote—for Kate had obstinately refused to have any hand whatever in getting her husband out of the way—said, suddenly, "By the way, Frank; I want you to do a commission for me."

"Certainly, Alice, what is it?"

"I wish you would go down to the music-shop at the other end of the esplanade, and ask if they have got the 'Isabella Waltzes.'"

"Very well, Alice; but won't this afternoon do? We can all walk down there together."

"I particularly want them to try after lunch, Frank. I have a particular reason."

"Oh, very well, Alice," Frank laughed; "if you have got a particular reason, of course there's an end of it. Come along, Prescott, you may as well walk with me, you have nothing to do."

"Yes, Mr. Prescott has, Frank; I want him here."

"Oh, you do, Alice? You appear to me to have become a species of despot this morning. Well, I suppose I must do as I am told."

Kate beat the ground impatiently with her foot, and would have spoken had not Alice looked imploringly at her.

"You savage girl," Alice said, when Frank had gone out of the room, "you were very nearly stopping him."

"I was," Kate said, resolutely; "and I'm sorry I didn't. You may laugh, Arthur, but I'm quite in earnest. I consider it's cheating Frank shamefully."

Alice did not answer, but turned to Prescott.

"Now, Mr. Prescott, will you wheel James in here from the next room? Come, Katie, you will be glad afterwards we have not let you have your own way."

A few minutes afterwards there was a sharp knock at the door. The footman, who had been previously instructed by Prescott to say nothing about the presence of the Maynards, led the way to the drawing-room. As Fred Bingham left the hall, he heard a loud burst of childish laughter.

"James!" he called, but the man did not appear to hear, but went on to the door which he opened.

"I wonder who the devil that child is," passed through Fred Bingham's mind in that short instant. "I hate children. That fellow's face had a sort of malicious grin on it. What can be up?" And then he advanced, with his usual pleasant smile, towards his uncle. "How are you, uncle? you are looking wonderfully well, and James, too, is——" And here he stopped abruptly, startled by the look of deadly hate and rage which sat on the cripple's pale face.

"James has been rather better lately," Captain Bradshaw said. "He does not look well now, for he is a little excited; but he has got a new nurse, who suits him admirably, a most excellent young woman, and an old friend."

"I am very glad to hear it, uncle," Fred stammered, seeing that some serious danger, the nature of which he could not comprehend, threatened him. "An old friend, did you say?"

"Yes, Fred, an old friend. I daresay you would remember her name if I were to mention it."

"Indeed," Fred said, the thought of all his possible enemies flashing through his mind. "What is it?"

"I will answer," a voice said; and, to the astonishment of the others, as well as that of Fred Bingham, a lady in black entered. "Carry Walker, Fred Bingham! Do you remember her?"

Fred Bingham recoiled as from a heavy blow.

"Carry," he gasped, "alive!"

"Yes, alive, Fred! You thought me dead, you thought the secret safe, and, secure in your own position, let the punishment fall upon another. Oh, it was a brave act, Fred; a brave act to deceive a trusting girl, who had no friends but an old father—a brave act to marry another and to leave her to die—a brave act to let the blame rest on your cousin, and to take his place, believing that I lay in my grave. But God spared my life, spared it that I might frustrate all your hopes and plans, and cast you down when you thought your success was certain. Fred Bingham," she said, advancing a step towards him, and rising grandly above him in her indignation, as he shrank back from her, "I despise myself that I ever loved

you—I loath myself that I ever listened to you ; but at last, Fred, my wrongs are avenged—the helpless, friendless girl you deceived and deserted has her hour of triumph at last. Heartless, pitiless, mean, Fred Bingham, since I have known you as you are, I thank God daily for one thing—I thank Him that at least I am spared the misery, the degradation, of being the wife of such a creature. And now, good-bye, Fred Bingham. I never thought to see you again. I once trembled at the thought of meeting you, now I feel only contempt. We have met twice, Fred Bingham; the first time you had your victory—now I have mine. I pray God we may never meet again.”

And Carry, actually majestic in her indignation and contempt, swept from the room. None of the other actors in the drama had spoken—to them all it had been a surprise; and they were all, but most of all the invalid boy, astounded at this burst of really grand passion on the part of the ordinarily quiet and gentle woman. Fred Bingham seemed to writhe under the girl's words. His face was ashen pale, his natty figure almost trembled; in vain he tried to speak, the words faded on his lips, the room seemed to swim

around him, as he felt the utter extinction of his plans and schemes. When Carry had left the room he endeavoured to rally, and would have spoken, but Captain Bradshaw interrupted him.

“Go, Fred Bingham; attempt no excuses, we know all, even to the fact of your tampering with my servants and sending back Frank’s letter. And now let me give you one piece of advice. Frank and his wife are here—yes, back in their proper places. Frank is at this moment out, but he may return at any moment. If you value a whole skin, I should say go before he does return; and one last word,” and here the old man strode forward, “if I ever catch you in my house again, damme, if I don’t have you whipped out by the maids.”

Without a single word Fred Bingham staggered out of the room, felt his way, rather than walked, down-stairs, and, mechanically putting his hat upon his head, went through the open door which James, with mock civility, held wide open for him. As he was going down the steps, however, a gentleman, walking rapidly, turned up them. He stopped, and, with almost a cry of exultation, exclaimed,—

"Fred Bingham!" Then he went on with an unnatural coolness which was more deadly than the fiercest outburst of fury would have been. "So, Fred, we have met again at last. The time for wiping out a little of our score has arrived. No," he said, as Fred shrank back, "I will not touch you with my hands. Had we met in another place, I would not have answered for you. I will punish you as I would punish a dog. James," he said, grasping his enemy by the collar with a force from which he would have been powerless to escape had he had ten times his natural strength, "fetch me that riding-whip which I bought yesterday, out of the hall, and tell my wife to come here."

Fred Bingham had recovered now from the shock he had suffered. Physically, he was not a coward, and he faced his powerful opponent with the courage of despair. For a moment, he made a tremendous effort to escape; but Frank held him without moving a muscle, as if even unconscious of his struggles.

"You shall repent this outrage," Fred Bingham hissed between his teeth.

Frank Maynard only smiled, he smiled again

when the servant brought him out the heavy riding-whip, which he grasped with his right hand. Then he waited immoveable. A light rapid step was heard in the hall, and Kate stood at the door.

"Katie, time was when you urged me to do this, for your sake I refused. Now, dear, my time has come. I am going to thrash him to within an inch of his life."

"No, Frank, no. Let him go. He has been punished enough."

Kate and Alice had gone again into the drawing-room when they had heard Fred Bingham go down-stairs. They had just begun to speak when the servant entered,—

"Please, ma'am, you are to go down-stairs to Mr. Frank; he has got Mr. Bingham, and I do think he will kill him."

For the man had been frightened at Frank's expression when he took the whip from him. All the party rose and made a movement.

"Oh, Katie!" Alice burst out.

"Stop!" Kate said, very pale, "stop, all of you, I will go down alone. I know Frank. None of you could turn him, not a hair's breadth,

now. I do not know whether I can. I will try."

"No, wife," Frank answered her appeal, "he has been punished for cheating his uncle, he has been punished for Carry, but he has not been punished for you, I—I, your husband, Kate—take that in my own hands."

Frank had not looked at his wife while he spoke; his eyes, wide with a savage glare, looked down upon his victim, and his powerful arm was slowly but steadily raised. Kate clung to him.

"Frank, oh, Frank, I forgive him!"

"Yes, Katie, you forgive him for yourself, but I don't forgive him for my wife. Stand aside, Katie!"

There was something so menacing, so deadly, in the cold calmness of his tone, that Kate shuddered, while Fred Bingham, although he had despairingly nerved himself for the ordeal, yet felt the blood tingling in every vein.

"Oh, Frank, if you love me, if you care for me, let him go."

"Katie, for the last time, stand aside."

Kate threw her arms closer round him.

"Frank! husband! look at me! Have I been

a good wife to you? Have I ever once murmured? Have I tried hard to make your life happy? Frank, since we have been married I never asked you any great favour. I ask it now, Frank, for this wretched man—not for his sake, but for mine—for the sake of your little wife, who so loves you. Oh, Frank, Frank,” and Kate’s eyes closed, and had not Frank’s right arm closed round her, she would have fallen.

Frank’s face had softened as she spoke, and as the little figure drooped more heavily upon him, his fingers unclosed from their vice-like hold of Fred Bingham. Then, without a word, without any apparent knowledge of the man he had released, he raised his wife and carried her into the house.

Two days after this, Captain Bradshaw was sitting alone with his grandson, when, after a pause, the invalid said—

“I want you to give me some money, grandfather—something I can do as I like with.”

“God bless my soul, my boy,” Captain Bradshaw said, hastily, “why did you not ask before? How much do you want?”

“Oh, I want a great deal, grandfather. When I

die I want to know that Carry is provided for; she was so kind to me in the old days. She would not take money from you,—she would not take it from me—but when I am dead, if I leave it to her, she would, I think, take it. It would make me very happy, grandfather.”

“Yes, yes, my boy,” the old man said, wiping his eyes hastily, “I will transfer an amount to your name, and then you can do with it what you like. I will write up to-day to my broker to sell out. How much shall I say, James?—£5000, and to invest it in stock in your name. Will that do?”

A silent pressure of the hand was the answer.

“I do not think I shall live to be of age, grandfather, but you will not dispute my will,” and he smiled contentedly.

Another two days, and it is the eve of their leaving Torquay. They have all gone down to the rocks. Frank, Kate, and Captain Bradshaw, are engaged in assisting Charley to hunt for small crabs. Alice Heathcote and Arthur Prescott are sitting a little apart.

“Of course we shall see a great deal of you in London, Mr. Prescott? Frank and Katie are

going to stay with uncle till they find a house to suit them."

"I will come as often as I can, Miss Heathcote; but I must go back in earnest to work now. I have been having a long holiday."

"It has been a pleasant one, has it not?" Alice asked shyly.

"Very pleasant—too pleasant—I shall have hard work to put it out of my head, and to settle down to work again in my chambers."

"I have been thinking, Mr. Prescott, that now we have settled into our old friendly terms I must go back to my girl's habit and drop the Mister. Uncle, and Frank, and Katie, and every one call you so; so in future I shall say Prescott."

Alice spoke jestingly, but she coloured.

"Thank you very much, Miss Heathcote—thank you very much. But you are mistaken, Kate calls me Arthur."

Alice hesitated. This time the colour flooded her whole face, and she said in a very low voice—

"But you call her by her Christian name. I cannot call you Arthur, unless you call me Alice."

Alice did not look up when she spoke. She knew what she had said : she was offering herself to him. She knew he would not ask her. A rush of happiness came into Prescott's heart. Was this great prize he had loved and waited for all these years his after all ? He took her hand.

"Alice, I have loved you ever since I knew you. I loved you with a boy's adoration : I have loved you with a man's love ever since. I have never ventured to hope until lately—never even dreamt that you could return it. Is this great happiness mine after all ? Oh, Alice, do you really love me ?"

A minute afterwards Charley ran up to his mamma.

"Mammy, I want to whisper." Kate lifted him up. "Mammy, Uncle Arthur is very naughty. I saw him kiss Aunt Alice."

"And quite right, too," Kate said, heartily. "If he had not been a bashful goose, he'd have done it a fortnight ago. It's all right, Charley ; but don't say anything about it. Here, take your basket and run off to grandpapa, he's caught a crab."

Three weeks after this time Fred Bingham's

name appeared in the Gazette, and on the very same day, among the announcements of deaths was that of his wife. Beyond the fact that he went to America, nothing was ever heard of him for certainty afterwards; although two or three years later, at Kate's request, Frank made an effort to trace him in order to settle a small annuity upon him. He never succeeded in hearing of him with certainty. The only clue was that a person answering his description was shot in a card-room in a low gambling saloon in New York.

John Holl is a happy and a flourishing man. He does not exert himself greatly now, but prefers sitting by his fire-side and smoking his pipe. The real management of the business lies in the hands of his son Evan, who is shortly going to take a wife to himself, and Kate Maynard is on the look-out for another nurse.

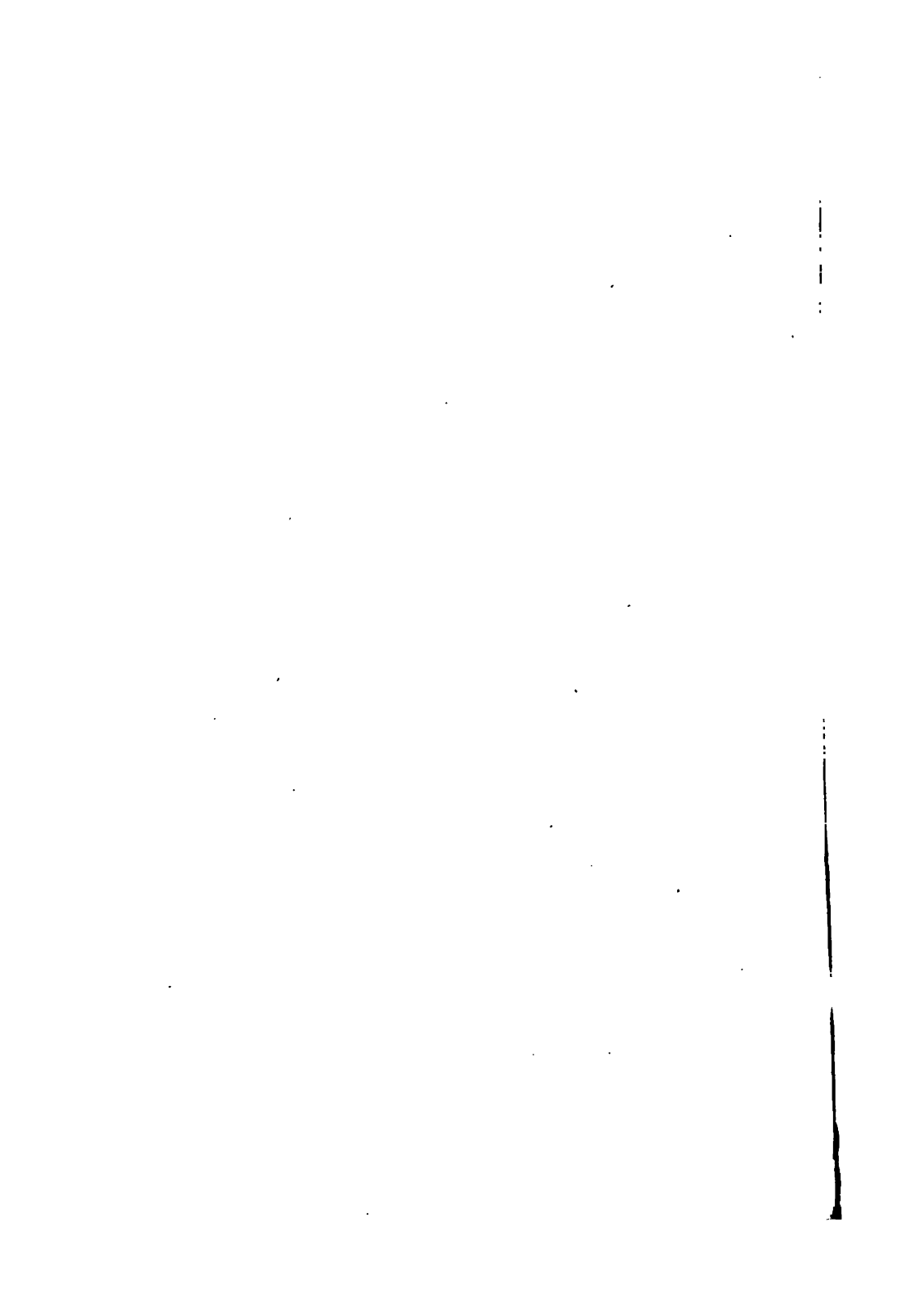
Down in a pretty cottage, near the New Forest, live an old gentleman and his daughter, a very pretty but very quiet woman, whose tender love and care for her father have won her the esteem of all around. Many offers has she had, but she has gently refused them all, and it is generally under-

stood that the young widow will never marry again. Years on, perhaps she may, but at present every thought and affection are centred in her father.

Frank Maynard and his wife live in Lowndes Square; with them resides their uncle, who is still alive, although now a very old man. He thinks a little sadly sometimes of a grave down at Torquay, within sound of the murmur of the waves, where, according to his wishes, sleeps the cripple boy; but generally he is as bright and cheery as ever, and spoils Kate's children, and she has four, immensely.

Arthur Prescott lives in Wilton Place, so that the friends are as intimate as ever; and Kate, on the strength of her superior knowledge upon the subject of children, is in great request with Alice at Wilton Place.

THE END.





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